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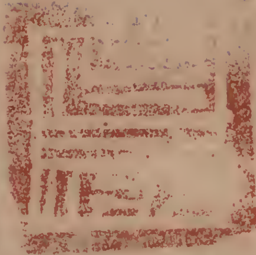

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An Unwelcome Birthday Gift.

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Reminiscences of a Chinese Official.

Revelations of Official Life Under the Manchus.

Reprinted from the *Peking Gazette*, and the *China Illustrated Review.*

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INTRODUCTION.

The *Reminiscences of a Chinese Official* were first published in the columns of the now defunct *Peking Gazette*. They were the work of a young foreign educated Chinese, and were based upon various Chinese publications which were surreptitiously circulated during the Manchu régime. The Editor of the *China Illustrated Review* secured the permission of the Author to revise them with a view to their republication in book form. The literal translation of Chinese idioms has been interfered with as little as possible, and it is the belief of the Editor that the *Reminiscences* will be found to contain a graphic, interesting, and not overdrawn account of the tortuous methods of Chinese officialdom in the latter portion of the nineteenth century. To make the narrative consecutive the reminiscences are all attributed to the same official, though many different sources were drawn upon in their compilation. Many of the incidents described in the following pages were peculiar to the China of the Manchus, but there has been no marked improvement in the competence or integrity of local officials under the Republic, and a number of the curious customs described by the Author are still observed.

It was the intention of the writer of these *Reminiscences* to add several chapters to the series, but he has not been able to supply the additional material.

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REMINISCENCES OF A CHINESE OFFICIAL.

CHAPTER I.

The Fruits of Scholarship.

Time flies like an arrow from the bow!

I am past fifty to-day, yet it seems only an short while ago that I was a boy wearing a tuft of hair over my left temple. Yes, I well remember the days when I used to go to the City-Temple on the shoulder of our faithful servant Laifu, to see the juggler and to listen to the story-teller. Oh, the days of childhood! But I am happy now I am fifty, with the hall full of sons and grandsons. Was it not only a few days ago that my friends and relatives came and congratulated me and called me blessed, on the occasion of my fiftieth birthday?

And that birthday celebration! It was one of the two happiest moments in my life; the other one being the time when I entered the Literary Hall—that is, when I received the B. A. degree. I was then in my eighteenth year, and was treasured as a pearl in the palm. I felt happy and proud, for I had not disgraced my parents and ancestors, but had brought glory to our family. It was this happy thought that carried me through that arduous occasion. For the whole of that day and several days afterwards, from morn till even, I had to call on people and kowtow to them until I thought my knees were going to crack and my head would burst. My first duty in the morning was to give thanks to our ancestors by sacrifice and worship; and then to do homage to my Grandmother and Parents. They were so pleased with my success that they stopped me when I had done only four out of eight kowtows. It was especially so with my Grandmother. She would not let me kowtow at all, saying that I was such a good boy, and that I must not be too tired as there was a good deal of kowtowing to do yet.

My next duty was to pay my respects to the Master of Learning of the city, as he was the Official Examiner when I first applied for the primary examination as a cadet scholar, and had since automatically become my teacher. Previous to my calling on him I had dutifully presented him with a two-table-feast and 40 taels in silver, which were sent under the care of two servants. To my surprise one of them returned, after being absent for an hour, and said that they had forgotten to take some "happy money" with them. When asked why the carriers had not come back, he said they were waiting in front of the Yamen, as the Yamen runners refused to receive the feast

until they are properly rewarded with 'happy money.' Of course they were very pleasant about it, saying that it was a happy occasion, and that it was the usual rule, and that "those who are near the hills live on hills, and those who are near water live on water" as the saying goes. The 'happy-money' was cheerfully given to nearly every department of the small Yamen, and in due time the feast was accepted and acknowledged by a card; the two servants were each rewarded with 140 and the carriers with 28 cash. The Master of Learning was good enough to send me some presents, which arrived at our house just a little before I set out to pay him my respects. The presents consisted of two sticks of Huchow ink and four Anhui brushes (writing), nicely laced on to a red silk cushion under a glass cover. These were received and placed on the main table, and the servants—there were two—who came with the presents, were treated with wine and each presented with 700 cash. To me these presents were of great value for, as far as my memory could recall, that was the first instance of a Master giving presents; nevertheless, some of my friends and relatives laughed and jeered at the idea of giving such mean presents. I told them that they were jealous of me and were trying to make light of the whole thing, in which remark my Grandmother joined heartily.

Well, finally I set out in a sedan chair for the Master's Yamen, but not till I had been reminded by Father to mention the presents. I was received in the guest room, which was sparsely but well furnished. After kowtowing to him I thanked him for his precious gifts, upon which he smiled and apologized for the "worthless trifles," as he termed them.

Next to the Master of Learning were the three teachers under whom I had received instruction. On these I called after I came out from the Master's place. I kowtowed to them as well as to their wives, as they are my 'teacher-mothers.' Naturally they received my kowtows with contented dignity, for, if it were not for them, how could I have gained such a glorious day?

It was noon when I reached home. My relatives and home folk were already at dinner. This being a purely family gathering very little ceremony was observed, except that the elders were invited to the seats of honour as usual. Without changing my official costume, I went round and poured each guest a cup of wine as a sign of politeness and hospitality. On this a cousin of mine suggested that they ought to offer me wine as a return ceremony of congratulation. His suggestion was accepted with approval from all sides, and I would have been made drunk, had not my Grandmother interposed. Finally they made me drink one cup in return at each table.

The feast over, everything was ready for the procession. This procession is supposed to be the public reception of the new scholar by his friends and neighbours. All the silk banners, flags and scrolls given by friends were displayed in the procession. They were attached to bamboos carried by coolies. A pair of big brass gongs and two 'clear-the-way-flags' led the procession, while I, in a chair draped in red, brought up the rear. After passing through all the main streets and calling on my teachers, uncles and father-in-law, we returned home at dusk.

Upon my return, I found nearly all our friends and neighbours waiting to congratulate me. After numerous bows I was able to retire for a few moments before the evening feast began. As this was a formal occasion with our friends it was more tedious than the one at noon. It took nearly one hour to give the important seats away. To give a seat I had first to dust the seat with my long sleeve, make a low bow, lift the chopsticks and cup and bow again. This process was repeated over and over again until all the important seats were allotted. I was really glad when everything was over.

CHAPTER II.

My Fiftieth Birthday.

Although my admittance into the Literary Hall was an occasion for great rejoicing, it was insignificant compared with my fiftieth birthday celebration. For though it is true that we were well to-do at that time, we lacked influence and fame. We had then very few friends in the official circle, and they looked upon us as country mice. Their attitude has, however, entirely changed since. With my rank, power and influence as the Grand Censor of Kiangnan, and with three of my sons all serving as Taotais, who wouldn't want to be on good terms with us and to be our friends? Even those who used to despise and sneer at us have changed into our worshippers; indeed they act as if they were the best of our friends. Take that fellow Li......for instance. He never called on us or did anything to show that he had any family connection at all with us, though his home was only three *li* from ours. In fact we know that he was of a different Li family altogether. But upon my being appointed to the Magistracy he came round with a whole lot of presents and claimed me as his distant cousin. Of course I had to be pleasant with him and ignore the fact that he is a 'small-man' (mean fellow); otherwise people would have criticized me for being too proud to recognize our relatives. By the way, he must have made a fortune out of his son's official post as the Magistrate of Yen-cheng—a fat position—judging by the way he spends his money. Why, he gave a complete theatrical performance in my Yamen to celebrate my birthday, besides the silver dinner-service set.

Now as a Grand Censor I should not have allowed presents of this nature, and I would not have accepted them had I known, before it was too late, that they were from him. Somehow or other, he managed to secure the consent of my head servant Ling Kwei to arrange everything for him without my knowledge. My wife disclosed these facts to me when the performance was about to begin. It was then too late for me to protest as the guests had already arrived; besides, people knew that he was my cousin and it is perfectly legitimate for relatives to plan enjoyment on such occasions.

To go back to the subject, this occasion, my 50th birthday, far excelled the last one (admittance into the Literary Hall) in every way. Upon the first occasion I had to be constantly on the move and on the spot. This time I need not stir unless I chose to. With the exception of receiving the Governor, the Treasurer, and the Military Commander, there was not even the necessity to entertain my guests. When a minor official came to congratulate me my Police Chief received him in the Official Hall, offered him a cup of tea, accepted his presents, wrote his name in the book and then sent him away. I felt sorry for these poor officials, but there was no alternative but to follow the old customs, as there were hundreds and hun-

dreds of them whom I would have to see if I wished to meet them. I was a minor official once and I had the same experience. I did not think it a disgrace, and why should they? Indeed, I was too glad that my presents were accepted at all.

Speaking about presents they remind me of a certain Huang...... a Prefect of Tunglin. He wanted to present me with a pair of very old China vases. These vases are valued at 5,000 dollars. Of course he did not mean to give those vases, as I never cared for curios. It was an old official trick often resorted to in Peking, where bribes must not be paid in ready cash but ostensibly in another form. Needless to say the curio dealer would have brought me $5,000 in money if I had accepted his offer. But I did not, for I knew what he was up to. People do not give away $5,000 for nothing, do they? No, not even for a birthday. He was down on the list of "severely censored officials" for unfaithfulness and incapacity, which I was going to present to His August Majesty, and he expected to bribe me into erasing his name. The degenerate! He ought to know that the Censorate Officials are not so devoid of shame and blind to duty as the others. I taught him a lesson by adding "exceedingly unscrupulous" to the original censorial term, which resulted in the removal of his rank from his name, instead of his name from the list.

Then, there was another man of the same calibre by the name of Tao...... He was even more ingenious than Huang in method. Knowing that I am a Hanlin scholar and naturally love poetry, he composed verses in honour of my birthday; these verses were written on a piece of brown silk by a famous scholar and mounted so that they would hang up like a scroll. This would have been treasured by me above all other presents, if not for the fact that it was tainted. When I opened the scroll I found a slip of red paper pinned on to the corner of it. A casual observer would have taken it for the card of the giver; but I looked carefully and found the inscriptions were to this effect: "Respectfully present this—Tls. 1,000, payable at the Mou Chi Bank—as an Audience Present. Presented with kowtow by your pupil Tao.........," In a rage I wrote on the silk in red ink the following words, "Literature is most precious. Brass (money) has an offensive odour. How dare you mix the two. To avoid soiling my studio, I return your original jade (present)." If it had not been for the mediation of the Treasurer I would have given him something worse for such an insult. Alas! Corruption has taken too deep a root in the minds of the officials One meets with temptations of similar kinds at every turn of official life.

These object lessons were marvellously effective, for no others ventured to try their skill in bribery, and all the presents which came afterwards were really ordinary 'longevity gifts' such as 'longevity'-peaches, 'longevity'-cakes, 'longevity' macaroni, fruits, wines, silks, silk scrolls, Chinghwa ham, shark's fins etc., etc. The number of presents was so great that it was all the two assistant accountants could do to receive and to record them. The names of friends and gifts filled three thick volumes. With the exception of twenty or thirty more important ones, I really do not know who have given me presents, still less what they gave.

CHAPTER III.

An Adventure in Disguise.

I was elated at my success in stamping down disgraceful practices, especially on this happy occasion. I enjoyed the evening's entertainment better than anybody else. Being the first evening of the three scheduled for the celebration, it was set aside for the people of my Yamen and my family. The celebration held the first evening, which was the evening before my birthday, was known as 'Longevity Warming.' Just before the evening feast, all my servants came in to warm my longevity by kowtowing and 'ch'ing-an' (bending of one knee). After them came the head-men of the different departments of runners. These of course, did not come into my house; they assembled in the covered courtyard and knelt down on the bare stone-paved ground. My family came next. The ceremony, which was an elaborate one, was performed in my private Main Hall. As I sat there, with my wife by my side, receiving the kowtows of my sons and grandsons, my heart was full and contented. Who could have thought that I, a son of a clothgarbed merchant (civilian), would have such a day, honoured by men and blessed of Heaven? Certainly this was Heaven's reward. It pays, yes, it pays to have a clean record and a pure heart.

After the ceremony was over the feast was spread, and all the secretaries and Departmental Chief belonging to my Yamen were invited. As that was an informal occasion they were told to discard their official costumes for the more comfortable common dress. This, however, was not sufficient to make them feel at home; for as long as I was there none of them dared to talk except in monosyllables, "yes," "no," "indeed," "quite right," and so on. Occasionally some one would say something, but always in the nature of praise or rather flattery. So after a while I excused myself and told my sons, who had come home expressly for my birthday, to pour wine and entertain them. This proposal of mine met with approval, of course, and immediately after I left, the Hall was humming and shortly afterwards resounding with laughter.

Unseen by the guests I and my family were in the left wing of the Hall enjoying the theatre. As I sat down with my family the performance suddenly stopped in the middle of a play and started again with the 'Promotion Dance.' (This is a short act in which a man in the costume of T'ien kwan (official of heaven) dances round and round the stage finally disclosing a scroll with the words "Promotion in ranks and increase in titles of nobility," which means "we wish you many promotions." Nobody paid any attention to it, however, as it is the usual custom of the actors to make a little extra money by giving a Promotion Dance on the smallest excuse. But instead of returning to the original play which they were performing, they began a new one called 'The Great Gathering of Peaches.' This play represents the celebration given by the gods and fairies in honour of Huang-mu, the Queen-mother of the Western Heaven, upon her birthday. Peaches of Heaven, which grow and ripen only

once in a thousand years, are served to the supernatural guests; hence the name of the play. I was told, when I asked for the reason of abandoning the unfinished play, that this was a feeble attempt of the actors to 'warm my longevity.' My wife, upon hearing it, was so pleased that she gave 10 taels as a reward to the actors. The first play was then resumed and finished.

When my wife and I were left alone after the guests were gone, I told her how I had treated Huang and Tao during the day. She did not seem to take my view, and quietly said that one has to be careful when dealing with 'small men.' She remarked that incidentally the minor officials of the Yamen must have been disgusted, as they depended on such practices for a large part of their incomes. I began to think she was right. No doubt they made less money than they anticipated; but why did they seem so contented? I smiled to myself. An old scene rose before my memory. I determined to make an investigation next day, for there was yet time.

Rising early the next morning I told my personal attendant to prepare a suit of cheap second-hand official clothes. He was amazed but said nothing, though he, I imagine, must remember the occasion when I first entered this Yamen. He thought I was going out on a hunt for evidence against some official—perhaps Huang. He went out and came back with the desired articles. Knowing my habits too well he let no one know what I was doing. Disguised as a minor official and taking Kwei-fu—that is the name of my attendant—with me, I slipped out by a side door and made my way to the front gate by a round-about route.

Leaving Kwei-fu some distance away I approached the gate in an embarrassed manner. As the porter seldom sees my face it was an easy matter to fool him. I told him in broken mandarin that I was a poor expectant Prefect and a fellow-countryman of His Excellency the Grand Censor. I expressed my desire to kowtow to His Excellency and congratulate him upon his 50th birthday. He looked at me from head to foot and said in an indifferent voice that the Police Chief (i.e. the orderly officer on duty) was busy and he was busy too. I told him that all I asked was to send in my 'shou-pen'—a folder of red paper with name and rank written on it. He sneered and said, "Am I your servant, that I have to wait on you? If you have time, wait there," pointing to a bench, "or else come again." Then I tried to persuade him that His Excellency was a good and considerate man and would certainly see me if he knew that I was his neighbour in his native town. At this he seemed to soften down a little and asked for my 'shou-pen', which I gave him at once, and with it a red paper packet containing about half a tael in silver. He dangled the packet in his palm as if to weigh it, saying not a word. I pretended not to understand and told him it was a small sum to give to the Police Chief, but it was the best I could do. "What, this for the Police Chief? Are you dreaming?" So saying he threw the folder and the silver on the table near by and folded his arms on his chest. "What do you think we Yamen people live on—on water? You had better go home. I have other business to attend to. You ought," he added, "to know better than to give such an insignificant piece of silver to his honour the Police Chief." With this remark he left me and went into his room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE POLICE CHIEF IS INVOLVED.

I was about to end the adventure when an idea struck me. Was there any truth in what the porter said about the Police Chief? I made up my mind quickly, and picking up the silver, I followed the man into his room. Evidently my action was anticipated, for he was peeping round to see if I had taken his tip. I entered the room, drew forth an envelope from the top of my old satin boot and approached the man with a smiling face and trembling hand. (Chinese officials, especially of the poorer class, always use the top of their left boot, which is high and spacious, as a pocket for visiting cards, petitions, fan, spectacles and other sundry articles. It is not unusual to see an official drawing a pipe and tobacco from this handy repository. No doubt the custom is the outcome of the elaborate attempt to avoid 'ignorance of etiquette,' such as fumbling in the pocket, which is an inexcusable crime. One can also imagine how convenient it is for the official to secure his petition immediately after 'ch'ing-an,' or bending his right knee before his superior, by quietly pulling it out of its hiding place, while rising from the half-kneeling position).

When he saw the envelope in my hand, the porter's stern and haughty face softened, though he kept on repeating the same formula "I have no time." "I am sorry," said I, "my ignorance has offended you. Had I known that I had to do my duty to his honour, the Police Chief, I would have scraped together enough to show my respect. But here is something, a mere beggarly sum of ten taels, which was intended for the Chief Secretary. I shall always remember your kindness if you will be so kind as to persuade his honour, the Police Chief, to accept my little meaning of honour (present); and here"—giving him the red package "are a few cash for you to buy tea." "Now", he said, "you talk like a guild-man," (a union labourer, a man of experience). "It does not matter much whether we get our share or not," he said, taking the envelope and the red package, "but the Chief's share must not be overlooked. Where are the presents you have brought for His Excellency the Censor?" "Why," said I, "I have not brought anything for His Excellency. I heard he was very angry with the two men who tried to present him with some money." "Was he?" mocked the man, "your intestines are too straight" (you are too simple minded). "Let me tell you," here he took a step nearer and, whispered in my ear. "You outsiders do not understand as we do inside. Did you ever hear of an official who refused to take money? The saying is 'Money is the only consideration to an official'. Give what you wish to give, and I will see it is accepted". "How dare you, you worthless rascal", I burst out at him suddenly. I could no longer restrain myself. "How dare you tarnish my spotless name, you ruffian?"

I was so enraged that I did not notice the people who had gathered outside the room. I must have talked in a very loud voice unguardedly. The porter himself was dumbfounded. He must have thought I had suddenly become mad. At this juncture I heard a slight stir among the people outside, and when I turned round I saw 'his honour' the Police Chief. Some one must have recognized my voice and have sent for him. He came in quietly and said, "Your humble servant waits upon your Excellency," after having first performed the usual 'ch'ing-an.'

This act and the salutation of the Police Chief awakened the porter from his spell, and he at once prostrated himself on the ground and begged for mercy. He knocked his head on the ground and pleaded for a chance to prove his repentance. He said that he had not recognized me; and that in a moment of covetousness he had fallen a victim to his weakness. Seeing that I was not going to let him off easily, he banged his head harder and wept like a woman, saying that he knew his crime was unpardonable, but hoped that I would give him consideration just for the sake of his old mother, who was sixty-five years of age.

Any soft-hearted man would have been deceived by such a pitiful plea; but not I. I had seen too much and heard too much to believe him. I told him he had better repent in the gaol, and leave his aged mother to me, if he had a mother living at all.

By this time my servant Kwei-fu had arrived on the scene. I told him to take the porter to the Magistrate with my card. I did not know what to do with the Police Chief as there was no proof against him. So I told him to consider himself under arrest for being involved in this case. To save his face, I would leave him alone in his room until I heard from the Magistrate. Meantime a new man was appointed to take the porter's place; and he was told that the Police Chief was not to leave the Yamen.

A few minutes after I had taken off my disguise the Magistrate called in person. He was immediately ushered into my presence and informed of the whole affair. I told him to make a thorough investigation and find out if the porter had accomplices. The Magistrate looked embarrassed and said to me, "Nothing can escape your Excellency's penetrating judgment. There are others involved whom I have no power to touch." "All right," I assured him, "you may take the Police Chief away with you; I will hang a notice outside immediately, temporarily depriving him of his rank." Thereupon he thanked me, and went away with the Police Chief.

CHAPTER V.

A Joyous Afternoon.

Although that day was my birthday proper, I did not enjoy anything. My heart was downcast. My spirit was gone. The thought that men living under my roof have been deliberately defaming me is too much to bear. The porter alone could not have done it. He must have had accomplices. Was the Police Chief really involved, and to what extent was the whole taff actually corrupt? It made me shudder to think of it. Indeed I was like a man sitting on a prickly rug. Suppose the man confessed and so dragged in a whole lot of my assistants; one may be sure that the Central Board of Censors would hear about it, and what would be......But no, the man won't confess. The magistrate would not allow him to drag any responsible men into the muddle even if he confessed.

While I was thinking thus the Treasurer called, and I temporarily forgot the affair. In my excitement I had nearly forgotten the feast I was to give that afternoon. By two o'clock all the guests had arrived, and we sat down for the banquet at about half past two. As usual, the Provincial Treasurer, the Commander of Troops and all the leading Taotais were my guests. As nearly all who sat down were my equals or immediate juniors we talked and laughed freely. Besides playing finger games, (games played by two persons, each putting out any number of fingers he fancies and shouting another number which ought to be the sum of the fingers the two players have put out. The one who guesses right wins; and the loser drinks one cup of wine as punishment), we had also poetry-games (games played by any number of people, in which the master, usually the host, gives a number of words to be used as rhymes or the first words of the lines. The master begins by saying a line containing the first key word in the stipulated place. The next man on his right says another line containing the second key word, keeping in rhyme with the first line, and so on until all the key words are used and the poetry is completed. If the line said is good, all join in drinking the author's health. The author drinks a cup alone if a mistake is made by him. There are many varieties of this game, but the principles are the same).

The most interesting part of the feast was the game known as 'Beating the drum to hasten the blooming of blossoms,' in which many of the illiterate officials were made to drink enormous quantities of wine. (This game is more difficult than the plain poetry-game, as one has to be quick as well as resourceful. A man sits behind a screen beating a drum while the guests at the table pass a filled cup from one to another. The movement of passing the cup must quicken or slow down as the noise of the drum indicates. If one spills the cup or happens to hold the cup when the drum suddenly stops, he drinks the cup, and the game is resumed again.) It was the Governor's secretary, I think, who suggested making the game more poetical

by making the following changes. Instead of the cup a sheet of paper and a pen were supplied. Taking 'Longevity Celebration' as the subject the guests were to compose a poem word by word. The master began by writing one word and then handed the paper and pen to the next man on his right. The next man then wrote another word beneath it which had to make sense when so joined with the first. The third man then took his turn, and so on. Meanwhile the drum kept on beating; if it beat loudly, the work of writing had to be done quickly; if it beat slowly then the writer could take his time to think. Occasionally the drum stopped, and the one who had the paper and pen in the hand had to drink a cup of wine. He was then excused from writing, and passed the writing materials to the next man.

I could see so plainly that some of the guests were bored by too much poetry when this game was through that I called for a better and more liberal way of drinking; thereupon the Commander proposed to 'carry the patriarch.' "It is not fair to make me, an old man of fifty, drunk," I protested. "It would not be out of place for the 'longevity-elder' to become a 'drunken fairy' as well, some one rejoined. This was approved by a chorus of "quite right" "indeed, indeed."

My eldest son, seeing the way I was cornered, came to my rescue. "All right, gentlemen, I will act as my father's wine cellar. Are you ready? How many cups would you suggest?" "Sixty is a lucky number to wish your honourable father a sixty years' great celebration," said one. "Oh, he can swallow sixty cups of wine in a single gulp," remarked another, "do you not remember that a tiger (good) warrior always has a tiger son?" "It is my fiftieth birthday, better make it fifty cups," I suggested. This was agreed to, and a big bowl was brought, into which fifty cups of wine were measured. The usual finger-game was played between my son and the guests one by one, until he had won fifty cups from them. Previously my son had drained the big bowl. Altogether it was a joyous afternoon. My mind was made so happy by it, that I forgot I had sent one man to gaol that very morning. The sun was well in the west when the feast was over and the guests had taken their departure.

I did not attend the evening theatre, as I was worn out and tired, but slept a sound sleep till next morning.

CHAPTER VI.

A Nest of Corruption.

The next day was a full day for me as I had to return the calls and thank my friends for the congratulations. It was nothing more than a long ride in the sedan chair, as I was received only at two or three places; all the others sent a card to the gate and apologized for their unworthiness to receive me. At none of the places was I kept waiting for a single moment, for my card bearer went about fifteen minutes ahead of us to notify them of my coming, and so the apologist was always waiting when my chair arrived.

Upon my return I was told that the Magistrate had been waiting to see me for about half an hour. He was at once admitted to my presence. After praising him for his diligence and ability I asked him what progress he had made in regard to the extortion case; thereupon he made the following report:

"Your humble functionary made a careful preliminary examination immediately after I had taken the two men to my humble Yamen. They were examined separately so that they had no chance to conspire to give false evidence even if they wished to do so. The porter at first denied any complicity with others, saying it was the only case in which he had been guilty of extortion, and that nobody else knew anything about it. When asked why he had said that the Police Chief wanted the money, he said he was afraid that he would not get the money unless he threatened in the Police Chief's name. I told him it was useless to lie, for even a country yokel would know that it is impossible for anyone to extort money in the way he did without its being known to others. But he insisted that he had no accomplice.

So I sent four trustworthy runners, two to his home and two to his room in Your Excellency's Yamen, to search his effects, when a number of unopened packages of silver and several incriminating letters were found. There was nothing to show that the silver was the proceeds of extortion or bribery, but it is strange that he, a porter, could have so much ready silver. Besides, he was unable to give an account of the money he had. All the excuse he could give was that it was given to him as reward money by the different officials. Asked if the big piece of silver was also given him as reward, he said it was some money his uncle had left in his care. There was no way to verify this statement as he said his uncle had left the city two days ago. Then I asked him about one of the letters, which said "The amount you named is all right. He has agreed to pay. If you will arrange the matter with Mr. Yang Shi-yuan the scribe, I will see that the money is paid to-night. I expect to see you in the tea house at 10 o'clock to-night." This he was not ready to answer at first, but finally he said that it was only a business transaction between Mr. Yang and the writer, he, the porter, being the middle man.

"Seeing it was useless to ask him any more questions I kept him in a separate room all by himself: and tried to see if I could get anything out of the Police Chief. He flatly denied any connection with this shameless practice. As he is still a man of rank in the eyes of the law, I could not threaten him or even use impolite language.

"There was, however, one channel through which I knew I could find out the secrets of their schemes. But I hesitated to proceed in that direction, because it involved another man of Your Excellency's Yamen."

"I see what you want". I said to the magistrate. "You want the man Yang Shi-yuan. Yes, you can arrest him. Take him away with you. I will give you two of my soldiers if you have not brought your runners."

"I beg your Excellency's pardon,' the magistrate replied, "I have already arrested the man. Your Excellency must excuse my impudence. I had to choose between letting the culprit go free or run the risk of incurring your Excellency's displeasure. Knowing that your Excellency is upright and just, I took the latter course. For had I arrested him in public other offenders implicated might take warning and flee. Besides, I was not sure whether he was really implicated at all.

"So I forced the Police Chief to write a letter to Yang asking him to come at once to arrange certain affairs for him. The letter brought the man into my Yamen within half an hour. He was immediately taken to my private study and questioned. Giving him no chance to tell stories, I asked him why he had accepted bribes from the porter and how much he had received. Taken by surprise, he said he took no bribe; but it was true that the porter did give him some money as his share of the reward money. "But the porter said you were the author and leader in the scheme to extort money from minor officials," I pressed. I also showed him the letter and told him that the porter showed it as a proof against him. "Oh, this is an injustice to me", he nearly wept, "why should I suffer for the crimes of others when I have not received even one hundredth of what they have?" I told him not to weep like a child but to tell me the truth, and I would see what I could do for him. He then told me that it was arranged between the Police Chief, the accountant and the porter's gang to cheat the minor officials by saying that your Excellency—excuse me for saying this—that your Excellency secretly accepted presents. But they divided the money they got between themselves. I asked him if he was one of the gang, and he said no. But he had accidentally discovered their scheme and was given some money to hush up the matter.

When asked if he knew how much they had made, he said he was uncertain, but he thought they must have made something like seven or eight houndred taels during the first day. I asked him how they managed to keep the others in the dark when they were doing such a bold thing openly. He said the porter made it a point to hand over the money to the Police Chief, who in turn handed it over to the accountant. All the runners at the gate knew about it, but they did not dare to say anything for fear of the Police Chief and the accountant; besides, they also received a small share from the Chief Porter."

CHAPTER VII.

The Cleverness of the Magistrate.

"After I had beguiled him to tell all the facts, the porter was sent for. At first he was bewildered to see the scribe in my room. He looked at him and then at me as if to search what was in our minds. This was only for a few seconds. He suddenly changed his frightened look into one of a relieved satisfaction and kneeling down, he said, 'Now, O! Your Honour, I know you are going to be merciful to me. The scribe knows that I have never cheated before, and I will never do it again.' Fortunately I had got all the confessions I needed before he came in, otherwise I would have been beaten by his tricks, for his last act was a hint to the scribe not to confess. I told him he was right in saying that the scribe knew, but he was wrong to think that he never cheated. To save trouble I told the scribe to tell him what he had done. The scribe shifted and stuttered but finally managed to say 'It is no use lying, I have confessed all.' So there was nothing else for him to do but to confess too. It was then an easy matter to secure the Police Chief's confession. They have signed the statements which I brought with me for your perusal. May it please your Excellency to have mercy upon them." Thus saying, he handed to me the official documents containing their confessions.

I was greatly surprised. I had no idea that the accountant could have done such a thing. He was recommended to me by the Chief Secretary, and has always been looked upon as the most trustworthy man in the Yamen. I told the Magistrate this. To my greater surprise he remarked that the Chief Secretary was not quite free from blame, adding that he hoped I would lift up my hands and let them off lightly. "It would be difficult indeed, your Excellency, to find an honest man nowadays, more so to find four," he concluded.

Yes, it is indeed difficult to find honest men, said I, half to the Magistrate and half to myself. To think that in this very Yamen of my own there should have been such corruption! It was too much, it was too absurd. My pride was so hurt that I thought of giving up my official career altogether. Then my thoughts went back to the accountant who was still at large. I will fix him first, thought I. Can you imagine a more unscrupulous and more degenerate man than he, who ate my rice, lived in my house, received my pay and yet went and did such a base thing! He ought to have cared for my reputation if he did not care for his. Oh, it was disgraceful! I called aloud for my own servant, and told him quietly to 'ch'ing' (invite) the accountant to come.

A few moments later the servant came with the information that the Accountant had gone, nobody knew whither. The rascal had decamped. He must have got wind of the trial, though it was kept secret. What should I do now? My head refused to think and I could not decide, so I told the Magistrate that he might go back to his Yamen, and keep the whole thing to himself. I would let him

know what my decision was within a few days. The Magistrate thanked me and said he understood. But he hesitated to leave as if he had more to say. Ordinarily such action on the part of minor officials is not tolerated. But this time I was really grateful to him. So I asked if he had anything else to say. Thus encouraged, he leaned forward a little and said in a low voice, "I beg your Excellency not to think me impudent, but be so kind as to consider my humble words. To my stupid mind, the best solution would be to make the case as light as possible. These men are away from their homes to make a living. They all have wives and children. If they are punished as no doubt they deserve, their wives and children will suffer, too. Besides, your Excellency must be aware of the fact that honest officials are as rare as the horn of the phoenix. Should you be too particular about honesty, all your able subordinates will desert you. To those who can understand, your Excellency's high standard of morality is virtuous and must be held up as a model; but to the ordinary people your unquestionable action may be misunderstood as peculiar and, if you will excuse me in so saying, unsympathetic. For, how many are there in this world who are upright and pure-minded like your Excellency? Furthermore, it would not be well for you should it become known to the people that such corruption exists right under your own roof. If the Board of Censors in Peking hears of your case, they will censure you for incapability instead of giving you credit for what you have courageously done in straightening official crookedness."

I interrupted the Magistrate at this juncture and told him that it was impossible for me to let those offenders off. They must receive the punishment they deserved. Besides, people must have heard of the affair, and it would be worse if I tried to hush it up. "But that can be easily managed, your Excellency." insisted he, "no one doubted that they ought to receive punishment; but they may be punished in such a way that your Excellency's honour will not be involved. As to the people outside, they only know about the porter. I have kept everything so closely to myself that your Excellency need not fear rumours. The measures would be perfectly just; only we have to go about it in a tactful way, that is all." "All right; do what you think is best." I yielded, "as long as these scheming rascals get their due punishment, I do not care how you go about it." I was really relieved at heart to see a way out of the tangle. It did not need the persuasion of the Magistrate to convince me of the dangerous position that I was in.

The Magistrate then took his leave assuring me that he would carry out my orders. A few days afterwards he came again and reported that the porter had been given 500 strokes on the back and was carrying the wooden collar for three months. For the Police Chief and the scribe he suggested immediate dismissal for being suspected, but not convicted, of extortion. As the accountant had fled, the less said about him the better. I told the Magistrate that he had done well, and that I would remember him when the Autumn general promotion came. He is a clever man that Magistrate, but I wonder why he was so considerate of others. Very seldom do I see a man of this type among the officials. Perhaps.........but..........., he has saved the situation anyhow.

CHAPTER VIII.

How to Get on in the World.

Now that the annoyance is over, the anxiety gone, I am once more at ease with myself. Official life is sometimes full of trouble, but it is also abounding in undisturbed peace, especially when one holds a high rank. When he is in good official-luck he may serve in a position for years without such mishaps as a local uprising, the breaking of a dam, unfilial murder or a missionary case. On the other hand, in a period of misfortune a man may suffer every sort of vexation. An official of some standing may have nothing to do for months except to sign a few documents every day. Even the remarks on the petitions are brought to him already drafted. This is why so many persons are willing to spend large sums of money to buy high rank and offer bribes for a high position. To my mind, there are altogether too many of these purchased-rank-officials. I think there are people who would be ready to pay any sum for a rank and post such as mine, were they able; but the rank of Taotai is the highest that mere money can buy. This explains why there are so many Taotais nowadays.

Speaking about Taotais and bribery it recalls to my mind a man by the name of Chia Yun-shen, who squandered nearly all the money he had in trying to secure the post of a real Taotai. As his case is very instructive though pathetic, I will give a full account of the first stage of his official life.

Chia Yun-shen was the only son of Chia Shiao-chih, the Treasurer of Honan. Though his father began his official career with a literary degree is was not so with Yun-shen. As he was the only son of the family, his parents did not wish to subject him to the humiliation and sacrifices of the examinations. By the expedient of contributing to the famine relief funds his father bought the rank of expectant prefect for him. A year later his father succeeded in securing him promotion by asking his friend the Governor to include his name among those who had rendered valuable services in securing large contributions, although he never even joined the staff. He then became expectant Taotai, wearing a blue button of the third rank.

But Yun-shen—henceforth we shall call him Chia Taotai—was ambitious. He would not be satisfied with a mere courtesy title. He was bent upon becoming a real Taotai—a Taotai with a real post. He once said that anything lower than the second rank and a red button was not worth having. This was the hardest problem for him to solve, for in the ordinary course of official preferment he must take his chance with the others and wait for the day when he would have a Province allotted to him by the impartial method of drawing; and then he might have to wait, perhaps, for years before being given a permanent position. He might have got out of this uncertainty by going to Peking with a large sum of money, say,

100,000 or 200,000 taels. But as he himself had not such a fortune and his father was a stingy man, this was out of the question. He therefore decided to remain with his father and watch for a chance.

The chance came when one day a message was received saying that the bank of the Yellow River had burst again below Chengchow and an area of thirty *li* was under water. Now according to the usual custom, the Central Government, whenever a break on the bank occurred, would spend a large sum of money, in this case 200,000 taels, for its repair. Such repair work is done under the administration of the Director General of River Works. In an emergency case like this one, extra sub-directors are appointed to supervise the works of a section. This sub-directorship—properly called River Works Directorship—is an exceedingly good position. Besides the amount of money he can get from 'squeeze,' he is also sure of rapid promotion after the breach is repaired. To this Directorship, therefore, Chia Taotai now turned his attention.

Through the influence of his father he secured a letter of introduction from the Governor to the Director General. This was, however, not sufficient to assure him of an appointment. A telegram was sent to a certain high official named Chou, a member of the Imperial Council, asking him to say a word to the Director General on his behalf. The next day an answer came saying that his letter would be useless as there was no love lost between him and the Director General, adding that only a month ago a man recommended by him was refused.

That was a heavy blow to his ambition, but he was equal to it. If he did not succeed in getting the Imperial Councillor's direct influence, he would find a way to use him indirectly.

So, without telling his father anything about his plan, he started for Chengchow where the River Works Yamen was situated. There he made the acquaintance of an official named Shiao Tao, a bosom friend of the Director General. Athough he told Shiao about the purpose of his trip, he did not make any pretence of wanting to see the Director General. Shiao, on the other hand, was puzzled by his strange demeanour. One day he asked Chia why he did not try to see the Chief if he wished to secure an appointment. This was the psychological moment Chia had been waiting for. But he took it calmly and said he had good reasons not to do so. He then told Shiao how, a few days after his arrival there he received a special message from his father saying that he had received a letter from the Imperial Councillor Chou, and advising him to return, the outlook of the River Works being somewhat dark as there might be changes shortly.

Shiao, being a close friend of the Director General, was naturally concerned and pressed Chia to tell him more about it. Thereupon he produced a letter, which he had previously forged, from his box. Saying that as they were such good friends there was no harm in letting him see it, he handed the forged letter to Shiao. The letter, which was supposed to be from the Imperial Councillor, read: "I am in receipt of your telegram. Have nothing to do with A (meaning the Director General). He is a mean and stingy fellow. None of us have any regard for him. I recommended B to him last

month, but up till now he has received no appointment. The less your son is connected with him the better." Believing that the letter was genuine, Shiao's expression showed marked anxiety. But he said nothing except to thank him for his kindness and remarked that if he were Chia he would not hesitate to call on the Director General.

Shiao must have gone to see the Director General the same day, for early next morning he came again to see Chia and told him that the Director General had been asking about him since he received the letter from the Governor ten days before and that it was a mistake that B's appointment was overlooked. Having thus made sure of his position Chia called on the Governor, and was immediately appointed Director of the Upper Section. Needless to say in due course he was asked by the Director General to intercede for him with the Imperial Councillor, which he was only too glad to do!

CHAPTER IX.

How to Get Rich through Relief Work.

Unlike the post of Director General, the Directorship of the River Works was a temporary one. Chia knew that the works could not last more than three or four months and if he wanted to make money, he had to set about it at once. This he did by dismissing the old accountant and putting in his place a man in his confidence. Before a month had elapsed he had the secretaries, purchasing deputy and works supervisors all changed. The purpose of such changes was obvious. The only one left in his way to prevent him from squeezing to his heart's content was the Director of the Lower Section, by the name of Feng. As luck would have it, however, Feng once openly grumbled at the way in which the old employés were summarily dismissed. This, of course, Chia would not put up with. They had a quarrel, and Chia Taotai threatened to resign unless Feng was removed. Fearing his influence, the Director General had to yield to Chia's demand. So Feng was removed to another part of the river and Chia Taotai was placed in supreme control of the works.

Under his able management, for he was really an able man, the works made rapid progress. Within two months the breach was narrowed down to the width of half a *li*. By that time the flood had subsided, which made the process of construction much easier. At the same time Chia Taotai's accountants were busy making or rather inventing accounts. The number of coolies employed on the works each day was easily made to swell from 3,000 to 10,000, and their wages increased, only in his books, from 100 cash to 180. The old half-rotten timbers he bought from the drift-wood collectors at 20 tael cents apiece were charged at 70 tael cents. He also paid the salaries of fifty or more men on his staff whom he never employed. During the critical periods when the coolies had to work extra shifts, he gave them each 10 extra cash as reward instead of 20. As for himself there were cart and horse allowances, body guard allowance, staff allowances, food allowances, extra allowances and what not. In short he made no less than 150,000 Taels out of his four months' work as Director .

(It must be understood here that although the amount allotted for the repair of the broken embankment on this occasion was 200,000 taels, the actual amount spent, including the remittances from the Provinces and the charitable institutions of Shanghai, amounted to something like 500,000 taels. Not more than 200,000 was actually used for the works proper, as there was really very little repairing to do. The Directors simply waited till the water subsided and then filled in the parts which had been washed away. The rest of the money went into the pockets of the officials.)

At last the breach was repaired, and a day was selected formally to close the gap. This was done, as usual, early in the morning. Chia was carried in a chair to the spot where the last bit of the gap had just been filled. A small matshed was specially erected, under

which was placed a make-shift table with candles and incense sticks buring on top on it. With Chia Taotai in the front the officials all knelt before the table and kowtowed nine times to thank the God ot the river for his mercy. It would be difficult here to say whether the country people or the river-works officials were more thankful to the God of the river. It would be still more difficult to tell whether they thanked him for his power to break the embankment or for his mercy in letting the breach be easily repaired. Perhaps they thanked him for both, as the former helped them to get a fat job and the latter gave them a wider margin for the artificial accounts.

The Director General was pleased at the prospect of recovering the title of which he had been deprived since the embankment broke. A petition was sent to Peking recommending Chia Taotai for special promotion. In due time an Imperial decree came sanctioning the request and giving him the title of Pu-cheng-sze. He was also ordered to proceed to the Capital to attend an Imperial audience himself, and to present a list of officials, who toiled in connection with the river works, for reward and promotion. Needless to say Chia Taotai had the list ready long before the decree came out. As is usual with such recommenaations, Chia's uncles, nephews, cousins, relatives and friends who took no part in the work, were included among the "toilers". and received their due share of the rewards in course of time.

Chia Taotai was happy, but was not quite satisfied. For, although his button had changed into red as he longed and hoped, there yet remained the difficult task of getting a real Taotai's post. But he thought it would not be so difficult, as he had money now. Accordingly he remitted 100,000 taels to Peking ahead of him, through the native bankers, and made preparations to go to the Capital.

Having formally thanked the Governor and taken leave of his parents and friends, he set out on his long journey to the Capital, taking with him his third concubine and about ten servants. It did not cost him very much to take so many persons with him, as carts, mules, hotels and meals were all provided by the magistrates along the route which the party followed. As they did not have to pay their expenses, they travelled at a snail's pace. It took them fully one month and a half to reach Peking. They made an average of thirty *li* a day, and on many days they did not move at all. The invariable excuse on such occasions was that the Yi-t'ai-t'ai (Madame the Concubine) was tired and needed a rest.

Finally, however they arrived at their destination and moved into a house which had been engaged for them by the Chinese banker Huang Kuei-hsin. By the introduction of this banker Chia Taotai afterwards came to know many prominent men of Peking. This I will relate later on in this narrative. Suffice it to say here that Huang served as ears and eyes for Chia in all his dealings while he was in Peking. For Chia Taotai was a young man over-ambitious for high official posts, and it was the first time he had ever been in the Capital. He was, therefore, obliged to believe in and trust a comparative stranger. This is not strange to anyone who knows Huang and his pleasant manners.

CHAPTER X.

Chia Comes to Town.

The proverb says 'Entertain no aspiration for official posts of any sort unless you have cooperation from men of the Court.' Chia Taotai must have remembered this. For on the second day after his arrival he called on the Imperial Councillor Chou. Following the usual custom he wrote the words 'Your little pupil' above his name on the card, to which a narrow slip was attached with the words 'Son of Chia, the Treasurer of Honan,' in small type. It happened that Councillor Chou was at home. Inwardly he was glad to see Chia, for every new pupil meant a new source of income to him. In fact he depended entirely for his support on the charcoal presents, ice presents and audience presents from such pupils. But outwardly he pretended that he did not care to see him. It was fully half an hour after Chia was ushered into the guest room that Councillor Chou came out. To Chia's kowtow he only returned a half bow. He offered Chia the right hand seat on the 'k'ang;' (a rectangular wooden structure like a bed, with a low stool in the centre for tea cups and hat stands) but Chia took a chair a little further away to show his respect for the old man.

The Councillor was evidently in a bad humour, for all he said was "How is your father", and then he began to grumble about a lot of things which were unintelligible to Chia; but as Chia made no attempt to take part in this one-sided conversation, the Councillor eventually asked what had brought him to Peking. Chia told him what he had done and what he expected to do in Peking. The Councillor, though he seemed to be listening was really waiting for Chia to finish. As soon as Chia stopped talking he lifted his cup, which was a sign for the guest to leave.

Chia was very much puzzled. He expected Chou to give him a warm reception. He had cherished the hope that Chou would give him a pull, and he was therefore utterly disheartened to see his first cracker miss fire. Then he thought of Huang Kuei-hsin, the banker. In his eagerness to make friends with the officials he had forgotten entirely about Huang. Now it came across his mind that he might be able to help him or at least enlighten him on the matter as he was an old Peking hand. So he directed his cart-man to drive him to the Ta Sa Lan where Huang's bank and home were.

Arrived at Huang's house, Chia called loudly for the banker. A laughing voice answered him from within, and a few moments later the two men were shaking hands like blood brothers. The banker was most effusive in his manner. "Why, my dear Sir, when did you arrive? I am sick for thinking of you," he said, beaming. He would not let Chia do anything but come in and rest awhile. He got up again, after they had been seated, and asked Chia if his father was well. Word was then given to his servants to

prepare for tiffin. But Chia declined, saying that he had still many calls to make. Thereupon Huang asked upon whom he had called. When told that he had just been to the Councillor's, Huang's eyebrows contracted.

"What is the good of calling upon such an out-of-date old fool?" he said, "You have wasted your time and tired your legs in vain."

"Why, what is the matter", said Chia in an astonished tone, "is he not still an Imperial Councillor?"

"Oh, yes, he is still an Imperial Councillor, but came near to losing his position for having recommended a reformer," answered Huang.

Chia suddenly looked wise and said "I suppose I have to be careful and not call on Chou any more, eh? People may take me for a reformer, too."

Huang banged the table in approval and thrust out his thumb to symbolize that Chia was a knowing man, saying "You are right, Sir. Yes, you are right. I see you are not going to be let in like the ordinary people and take a stone for a God, ha, ha."

But Chia became serious. A new thought had struck him dumb. If Councillor Chou was now powerless whom else could he look to for help? He meditated, scratched his head and drummed the table with his fingers, and said nothing. Huang at once guessed what was in his mind and told him not to worry. He assured Chia that he could trust him to help him out of this little difficulty.

"You trust every thing to me," he said, "I will guarantee success. I know quite a few of the men on the inside. I will approach them on your behalf. As we are of the same family (an affectionate term for friends) you may rest assured that I will do my best".

Upon hearing this Chia was visibly relieved. He thanked Huang and said that there were many things which he would like to consult with him about when he had finished his calls. He then rose and took his leave. As he seemed to be in a great hurry, Huang had to let him go; but not until he had repeatedly told him that he would soon invite his influential friends and introduce him to them.

True to his promise, Huang set about inviting his friends immediately after Chia was gone. Six men besides Chia were invited. One was a new Hanlin. (a member of the National Institution) named Chien Yun-tung; and one was a Councillor of a Board by the name of Wang Chan-kuh. A third was Po-hua, a member of the Imperial family. The fourth was Pai and the fifth Hei, both leading merchants. The last one, however, was an important personage. His name was Liu Hou-shou. Although his official rank was rather low he was well known in official circles on account of his intimacy with the red (favoured) Imperial Councillor Hua. Formerly he had been Councillor Hua's porter. But he had now quite a fortune of his own and owned a curio shop outside the Ch'ien-Men. Many a man had secured entrance into the Councillor's home merely through Liu's introduction.

CHAPTER XI.

A Drunken Brawl.

The next day, the guests began to arrive at a little before twelve o'clock at a place called Pien Yi Fang, a well known restaurant. Huang, the banker, was there to welcome them. At half past two all had arrived except Wang Chan-kuh, the Councillor of the Board. After being introduced to each other, they sat down for the feast. The conversation was confined to the personal anecdotes of the guests. The general atmosphere was really genial until Wang's arrival, which took place when the feast was about half over. He came in full official costume. After bowing all round he was asked by the host to change his dress. The first seat, which had been left unoccupied was then offered to him. He formally declined to accept for a few minutes, but finally took the chair. The whole party then resumed their repast. Wang, being the guest of honour, naturally led the conversation. First of all he asked the surname, the name and official rank of each guest present. When he found that he and Chien were the only ones who had received their official ranks after duly passing the literary examinations, he at once put on an air of superiority, and would not speak to anyone except Chien.

Wang's peculiar behaviour so aroused the dislike of Liu, the influential curio dealer, that he silently meditated a plan to disgrace him. He chose the moment when Wang was boasting about his literary attainments and the superiority of a certain school of classics, when he suddenly burst upon him with the question "Why, Mr. Wang, your face is very familiar to me. Surely we have met before this." It was an embarrassing question, because a year ago, when Wang was first endeavouring to secure a foothold in the official circle, he called many times at the gate of the Imperial Councillor Hua and begged for an audience with him. Liu was then Chow's chief porter and Wang had had to sit in his room and be pleasant to him. Wang, therefore, blushed and stuttered; but managed to say "Yes, you remember the time when I sat in your room waiting for his Excellency the Councillor. It was after the Imperial examination, was it not?" "Oh, yes, I remember now" said Liu, "You see, there were so many wanting to see his Excellency; why, there were scores and scores of Provincial Treasurers and Commanders who came and went. Even them I have forgotten, not to say...," and there he suddenly stopped. It was an open insult. But Wang had to take it. The host Huang came to the rescue by remarking that indeed Liu ought to have given Wang a helping hand as he was really a diligent and genial man.

To change the subject the host suggested that they should send for some singing girls. This was generally approved. Printed slips were used, on which were written the names of the girls they

wished to call. Chia, being a stranger, knew no one. Huang suggested a certain Ling Kuei-yun whom Chia accordingly sent for. Ling proved to be really a pretty girl and sang well. Seeing that Chia was a dashing young man she was not slow in winning his admiration. While the others were singing or chattering aloud the girl was quietly and affectionately asking Chia about his home, his rank and his doings. Her manner was so conspicuously intimate that Huang jokingly said that they looked like a couple on their honeymoon. The girl at once cut in and asked if Huang would like to be the middle-man and take his 108 tables of feasts. (It is commonly said that a go-between of a matrimonial match is entitled to eat 108 times at the feasts of the bride and bridegroom.) Huang joined in by saying that he was really the go-between as it was he who recommended her to Chia, and that he ought to have a table that very evening. Chia was only too glad to have a chance to go to the girl's house, and therefore at once promised them all a treat the same evening. With the exception of Wang, who still felt the sting of Liu's remark, and of Liu who had business to attend to, all the others agreed to go. As it was already 5 o'clock in the afternoon, Chia suggested that they start for Kuan Ying Sze where Ling Kuei-yun's house was.

Arriving at the house of Kuei-yun they found everything ready for them. Another table was spread and they sat down to another feast, while the girls entertained them with songs. While they were thus engaged a stranger came in, who nodded to Huang, and went into the next room where he joined a party of friends. Everything went on smoothly until Kuei-yun had to go to the next room to do her share of entertainment. By that time Chia was nearly drunk and he insisted that the girl should remain. When told it was not the custom of Peking to detain a singing girl in this way, he became enraged. In his drunken state he smashed everything on the table and swore that he would get at the rascal in the next room. By dint of pulling and pushing he was put into his cart and sent home. His friends left him at his gate.

Early next morning he received the following letter from Huang:

Dear Brother Chia.

It was a most enjoyable evening we had at Kwei-yun's place. But you never had any idea, I suppose, that you offended one who could do you a great deal of harm. The gentleman whom you called by all sorts of names was no less a person than Lu Chih-hou, the minor Imperial Councillor. Kuei-yun has sent me word that he enquired minutely about you and was evidently planning for your injury. You know very well what such man could do. Being a personal and close friend I am writing this to give you a warning.

Your younger brother,

HUANG KUEI-HSING.

Chia would not believe his eyes. He rubbed them and stared at the letter again. A moment ago he was still under the influence of the wine he had drunk the previous night, but he was now wide awake. He hastily dressed himself, and without taking anything for breakfast, he made for the bankers' house.

CHAPTER XII.

CHIA IS INVOLVED IN INTRIGUE.

Although it was eleven o'clock when Chia reached the banker's house, the latter was still in bed. He was wakened from his sleep and had to leave his bed against his wish. He never thought that Chia could get up so early. But he was glad that his letter had had the desired effect. He chuckled to himself and whistled a popular song. He knew that his plan was shaping well and good business was ahead. To show that he was really obliging he came out with his coats half buttoned and his shoes worn slipper fashion.

"My dear sir, what has brought you here so early?" he said to Chia, as if nothing had happened.

"Why, your letter of course," answered Chia, astonished at his cool manners.

"Yes, what about it? You have not been torturing yourself on account of this little matter, have you?"

"A little matter, do you say? Why, you told me in your letter that he, the minor Councillor, could do me a lot of harm."

"Oh, I see, you were not thinking of Kuei-yun. I thought you were so enraptured of her that I never expected you would talk about anything else. As to that fellow Lu you may put your mind at ease. He has not yet done anything and there is plenty of time for us to lay our plans."

"Please do not trifle with me. I really meant what I said to you", pleaded Chia.

"All right", said Huang, "but first we must have something to eat."

Accordingly breakfast was brought in and they sat down. Chia was like an ant on a warm stove. He tried several times to draw the banker to the subject he wanted to discuss, but Huang evaded his remarks and talked about a cricket-fight. It seemed ages to Chia before he finished his breakfast and wiped his face with a hot towel. Huang then took Chia into his private study and told him that it would not do to talk about such an important matter where any body else could hear.

In half threatening and half persuasive language he explained the situation to Chia. He told him that Lu was an awfully mean chap and would not stop at anything to remove his rivals, and that he was, to a certain extent, powerful. When Chia asked him to intercede, he scratched his head and tapped his toe.

"You see," he said, "Lu is bent upon ruining you. I shall be glad to do what I can for you, but I am afraid my efforts would be of very little avail."

"Now, do be a good fellow," pleaded Chia, "you know I have no other friend in Peking except you. I am sure you can help me out of this awful mess. I don't care if I spend some money. Do you think he will take money?"

"Of course he will take money," Chia rejoined readily. "But mind you, he is a greedy man. He would not care for a couple of thousand."

"How much does he want then? Name the figure and let us be done with it," said Chia in an impatient tone.

"Why, you talk as if I am bargaining for Lu. I am sure I don't know how much he expects from you. But are you really sincere?"

"Of course I am. Why?"

"Look here," said Huang in a confidential manner, "I have hit upon a method by which you could kill two birds with one stone."

"Why didn't you tell me earlier instead of making me fret like a headless fly?"

"Well, it is this way," explained Huang. "If you have money to give to a minor Councillor, why don't you give it to a Grand Councillor? If you have a Grand Councillor on your side, what need you care for a minor Councillor? Besides, you are here in Peking seeking a short-cut to office. Sooner or later you will have to take that road. If I were you I would take it now. and be hanged to Lu. If he kicks, he will find it is against the pricks. Then, to be sure that there will be no obstacle inside the palace, it would be best to give some present to the Chief Eunuch. You remember that gentleman Mr. Hei whom I invited to supper the other day? Well, he is a nephew of the Chief Eunuch. Through him you may go into the palace and attack the problem from the inside. Now what do you think about it?"

Not knowing the ins and outs of Peking officialdom the scheme sounded very simple and practical to Chia, and he at once agreed to every thing Huang had said. "Now let us go at it as soon as possible," Chia urged, and added, "How much money will it require?"

"Please do not be in such a hurry. Such things take time, you know. Of course it will take less time than to wait in the ordinary way, but still we have to go at it tactfully. To begin with, the red Grand Councillor Hua would not accept money. He is a bit peculiar; but I think he is wise. So we have to work through the curio dealer Liu."

"Are curio dealers so influential in Peking?" Chia asked.

"Oh no," answered Huang," not every curio dealer is influential; but this one is. You see, it is with the capital of the Grand Councillor that he has been running the shop. Do you think the Councillor would entrust him with so much money if he were not in Councillor Hua's confidence?"

"I see now," Chia said, "All we have to do is to give him some business, and when he has made his money he will put in a good word when he goes to Councillor Hua. Is that it?"

"That is not it," said Huang, shaking his head, "You think the Councillor lives on 'good words'? The thing to do is to make him a present of some curios. These must be purchased from Liu's shop, say to the amount of 20,000 taels or more. Now remember, whatever Liu offers you as curios, buy them on the spot, no matter if they are broken pottery or corroded brass. Do not bargain for the

prices either. If he says 1,000, give him 1,000, if he says 10,000 give him 10,000. You follow me?"

"Yes, I understand you perfectly well. But the figure sounds a trifle too big," said Chia sheepishly.

"My dear sir," rejoined Huang, "you don't know what you are talking about. You may consider yourself lucky when you can succeed with a paltry sum of Tls. 20,000. Why, the man who was appointed Taotai of Shanghai paid 300,000 taels. Look here, I don't want you to spend any money unless you are willing. If you think it would not be worth while, you had better drop the scheme right now."

"Please do not get angry," Chia begged. "I was joking."

"I might as well tell you," said Huang, "that other Councillors must be given something too, or they will make it unpleasant for you when they get wind of what you are doing here."

"All right, do what you think is best. I trust you. I am sure you won't let me suffer unnecessary hardship."

"That is the way to talk," said Huang. "Now let us go to the curio dealer."

CHAPTER XIII.

CHIA IS PLUCKED.

It was only five minutes' journey by mule-cart from Huang's bank to the curio dealer's shop at Liu Li Chang. They found Liu at home. They were ushered into a nicely arranged little sitting-room where the dealer used to receive official customers. After the usual greetings Huang explained their mission to him. This was hardly necessary as Huang and Liu were accomplices and knew exactly what was going to happen, but it was necessary that Chia should not understand that the affair was pre-arranged. With an assumed air of indifference Liu asked Chia to make his own choice. With the knowledge of an expert, Chia picked out several articles which he thought would be liked; they were a pair of snuff jars, a three legged cauldron, a musical gong—all made of jade—and a set of screens inlaid with pearls and jade. Liu was pleased with Chia's choice and remarked that he must know a great deal about the whims of a curio enthusiast. He said no one could have made better choices than he, especially the pair of snuff jars. He said that among all the valuable things the Grand Councillor collected he liked snuff jars best, particularly so when they were good ones. Then he went on to tell them that the pair he was then selling to Chia was the best that money could buy. "I guarantee that his Excellency Hua will be exceedingly pleased with your presents," he said. Chia was immensely elated by the flattery and said that he still needed Liu's advice.

Chia then asked him about the prices of the articles, and Liu told him it was Tls.2,000 for the jade jars, Tls.3,600 for the cauldron, Tls. 1,300 for the gong and Tls. 3,200 for the screens. Still ignorant of official ways Chia asked if the prices might be cut down a little as they looked a trifle too high. Instead of answering him the curio dealer turned his eyes towards the ceiling. Huang at once interposed and said that it was not necssary to bargain with Liu, who was the most reliable man in Peking; besides they were intimate friends. Chia could do nothing but accept the inevitable. So he told Liu that it was all right and that the money would be deposited in the bank in his favour. Liu, however, took the chance to say that had it not been for the 'face' of Huang he would not have sold the pair of snuff jars at any price, whereupon both Huang and Chia had to thank him again.

"Now," said Huang, "the next question is how these presents are to be sent. We might as well presume on the kindness of Mr. Liu to ask him to go to a little more trouble on our behalf. What do you think of it, Mr. Chia?"

"I shall feel much obliged if Mr. Liu would be so kind," answered Chia.

"I am sorry that I have to disappoint you," said Liu very politely. "Not that I am unwilling to serve you, you know. The difficulty is that for a long time I have not been to the Grand Councillor's and the porter and servants have all been changed. It would not do for me to bargain with them, as I am an official now."

"We do not expect you to put in any money of your own," said Huang, "nor would we have you humiliate yourself by bargaining with the porter. All we ask is that you arrange to have these things sent in a proper way. Whatever expenses may be necessary, Mr. Chia is only too glad to pay. Is it not so?" the last sentence was directed to Chia. What else could Chia say but "Yes, yes, of course."

"If that is the case," said Liu," I will do what I can. I think the porters should not be allowed to demand more than they deserve, and I will take care that they don't. Now your presents amount to about 10,000 taels. The usual and proper custom is 'one cover to one lining.'

"What is one cover to one lining?" asked Chia, ingenuously. He looked so ridiculously simple that Huang burst into loud laughter.

"You are not really so simple as all that, I hope" Huang said, "One cover to one lining means that as your presents are worth Tls. 10,000, the extra expenses would be also Tls. 10,000."

"Does it really need so much?" said Chia, forgetting himself for a moment. Then he suddenly awoke and said "But of course it does. All right, Mr. Liu, please go ahead with it. Mr. Huang will give you the necessary sum. When will you need it?"

"To-night at seven o'clock. I will send the presents in some time to day. You can go and call on the Grand Councillor tomorrow afternoon" said Liu, very confidently. And having thus arranged everything satisfactorily, they made their way home.

Unable to control his eager desire to see the Grand Councillor, Chia got up early next morning and proceeded to the Councillor's home at a little after 10 o'clock. Naturally he found that he had gone to the Palace. Fortunately Liu had arranged everything for him over night and the porter was very pleasant to him. He waited for fully two hours before the Councillor came home, and then for about an hour more before he was ushered into the presence of the Grand Councillor. Chia was surprised to see this great man so kind and pleasant in manners, as he had been prepared for as cold a reception as he had had at the hands of Grand Councillor Chou. But for obvious reasons Hua was quite different. He used the term 'younger brother' whenever he addressed Chia. This meant that he had acknowledged Chia as one of his pupils. Besides asking Chia about his father, family and personal affairs he also talked about his own affairs. All this was evidently meant to show the Grand Councillor's consideration for his newly acquired pupil. In short he gave Chia to understand that the presents he had received were much appreciated, although not a word was breathed about them. Readers of my reminiscences may easily imagine how happy Chia was when he got home.

To avoid rousing jealousy and suspicion, Chia also called on the other Grand Councillors, to all of whom he had previously given audience presents in various amounts according to their influence. The visits were all brief ones, lasting only about ten minutes each. It was dusk when Chia returned to his home. That night Chia had a sound sleep, believing that he was on the way to success and fame and glory. Little did he suspect how far he was from his goal.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANOTHER TRICK.

The day after the expensive audience with the Grand Councillor Hua, Chia Taotai set about making arrangements to see the Chief Eunuch. This, again, had to be done with the help of the banker Huang. So he ordered his mule-cart to be ready to go out at noon. Just then one of his new acquaintances called. He had come purposely to congratulate Chia on having become the pupil of the Grand Councillor. During their conversation this acquaintance mentioned the coming birthday of the Empress Dowager and said that it would be a good chance for any expectant official to show his loyalty to the Old Buddha. Chia was at once interested and asked the proper way to do it. His friend told him that all that was necessary was to give appropriate presents at an early date. When asked how much money would be enough and what was the best way to make the gift, Chia was informed that 20,000 taels worth of precious articles from an expectant Taotai would be ample, and as to the way, the best channel to send it through was the hands of a eunuch. The friend then told Chia that as he (the friend) was an official connected with the Imperial Household Department he would be very glad to give him any help. He also hinted that if it were entrusted to the hands of others it might cost him a great deal more. Chia thanked him and said that he would certainly accept his kind offer if he decided to try that 'door.'

Chia called on the banker immediately after his friend had left. Huang was about to leave his house when Chia met him at the gate. He invited Chia into his private study, saying that he was always at his service and was glad to see him, and so on. He then inquired about the previous day's visits and congratulated Chia upon having such an influential man as his Tutor.

Having gone through all the necessary formal conversations Chia broached the eunuch question.

"Yes," said Huang, "I have arranged everything for you. I have seen Mr. Hei and asked him to speak to the Chief Eunuch about it. I am expecting an answer from him at any minute."

"Did he say how much it will need?" asked Chia rather anxiously.

"Oh, not much," answered Huang carelessly, "only a paltry Tls. 30,000."

"But that is a big sum", complained Chia.

"All right," said Huang, "if you are not willing to spend some money, you had better roll up your bedding and return home. Have you not heard the proverb 'No small money going out, no big money coming in'? I might as well tell you that even if you are fortunate enough to secure an audience with the Chief Eunuch, you will have to spend some more in order to get an appointment as a real Taotai."

"What about the Empress Dowager's birthday", asked Chia, "couldn't I get a special recommendation if I gave some valuable presents?"

"Yes, you can, but have you any idea how much it is going to cost you? Anything presentable to Her Majesty the Old Buddha would cost you at least 50,000 taels," said Huang.

"Oh, no," said Chia eagerly, "I know it would not cost me more than 20,000 taels, and it would be a direct present to Her Majesty."

Huang was puzzled. He did not expect Chia to know so much. Evidently some one had been letting out his secret and spoiling his plan. Something must be done, or he would lose his business. With the cunning of a fox he changed his manner. Shifting nearer to Chia he told him, in a very kind way, that it might be possible to save something. It was foolish to throw away money like water anyhow. But he would first consult Mr. Hei, as he knew better. Meantime he cautioned Chia not to say anything to anybody; for if the news got into the ears of some of the greedy Councillors they might censure him. Thus he succeeded in allaying Chia's suspicion and giving himself time to revise his plans.

Huang shut himself in his study after Chia was gone and thought hard. He could not understand how Chia could have such pluck in disputing his suggestions as he had always appeared so easy-going and indecisive. But now he had decided for himself and defied his adviser, Huang thought he must be careful in his next move. So he set to work and mapped out his plan carefully. He would let Chia satisfy his desire of giving presents to the Old Buddha, but he would also teach him not to listen to others in future. But in order to do this he must take into his confidence Mr. Hei, the nephew of the Chief Eunuch. As that was the only way to get out of the tangle, he decided to let Hei share a little more of his spoils.

Having fully decided his plans Huang called on Hei that same afternoon. He told Hei that Chia had suddenly become stingy, and that he must be taught a lesson. To fan Hei's hatred for Chia, Huang told him that Chia had intended to skip them and take some other 'door.' Hei's indignation was fairly boiling when Huang got through with his stimulating speech, and he was ready to do anything that Huang suggested. Huang then told him his plans and asked if he wouldn't arrange matters in the Palace. Of course Hei was willing, and so the matter was arranged.

The next day Huang invited both Chia and Hei to his house, where they decided that Hei would arrange to take Chia into the Palace together with the presents which Chia was to purchase from a friend of Huang. The presents were to cost 10,000 taels and the sundry expenses also 10,000. It was also promised that Chia would be taken to see the Chief Eunuch as a proof of good-faith.

Accordingly, two days later, Chia and Hei went to the Palace, having previously arranged to have the presents sent ahead of them. They found the men with the cases of presents waiting at the side gate of the Palace. There they got out of their mule-cart and entered the gate with the present-bearers following them in a long train. They passed door after door, ascended and descended terraces, seeing and meeting no one. Then they came to a solid-looking brick house

built on a raised foundation of marble. There the bearers were ordered to lay down the cases containing the precious articles of jade and jewellery on the ground and return to the gate.

After a few minutes a eunuch came out and demanded to know what all this was about. Taking the hint from Hei, Chia approached him and told him that he had brought some presents for Her Majesty the Empress Dowager for her august birthday.

"What," said the eunuch, "who are you, and what is your rank?"

"My name is Chia Yun-sheng," answered Chia, stammering, "and my rank is Taotai."

"If you are a Taotai you ought to know better," thundered the eunuch. "Don't you know that Her Majesty has decreed that no presents should be offered? You must be an extraordinarily impudent man to dare to try it, in spite of Her Majesty's Imperial Decree. All right, you may be quite sure that I shall report to Her Majesty about this affair. You may go home and wait for orders." Thus saying he left Chia standing in a stupor. It was not until Hei touched him on his shoulder that he came to himself and asked where he was.

Hei, after comforting him and telling him not to be afraid said that it was really his own fault. Had he not cut down the usual figure to the insignificant sum of 20,000 taels everything would have been well. "These eunuchs are awfully mean fellows," he said to Chia, "they would not tell you that your offer was not enough because they never discuss the price, although they love money dearer than their life."

"But what shall I do?" asked Chia hopelessly. "If he reports the whole thing to Her Majesty I might be put into prison, for all I know."

"Don't you bother too much" said Hei, "with money one can do anything."

Chia readily agreed to pay any reasonable amount just to get out of this difficulty, as he was thoroughly frightened. Hei then entered the brick house and remained there several minutes. He told Chia, when he came out again, that everything was arranged, and that Chia was to pay 20,000 taels more in cash to make up for his impudence, and then he would be taken to see the Chief Eunuch. The presents they had brought with them were to be left in the Palace as guarantee of faith and the money was to be paid within two days, failing which Chia must take the consequences. He also told Chia that it was fortunate that he had come with the Chief Eunuch's nephew, otherwise the matter would have been far worse. Seeing the hopelessness of the situation Chia agreed to everything Hei said and thanked him for his kindness. He got home that day a man:

'Returned from the cave of treasure empty-handed.'

CHAPTER XV

An Interview with the Chief Eunuch.

The next day Chia called on the banker, told him all about the affairs of the previous day and asked him to transfer 20,000 taels more to the credit of the Chief Enunch, which was easily done. Huang shook his head, stamped his feet and uttered something that would have brought his head off if the eunuch had heard it.

"I told you not to be particular about money if you intended to be successful; but you would not believe me. How about it now! Have not my words come true?" he said.

"Let us drop that question," Chia said rather disgustedly. "Now tell me if Hei's promise to let me meet the Chief Eunuch is true. He does not appear to me a man to be trusted," he added.

"No," rejoined Huang, "nor do I believe he is. I never thought he could do much. However, we may trust him as far as the audience with the Chief Eunch is concerned. Could he expect to do other business, if he dared to fail us this time? Why, he must have made something like 2,000,000 taels through my introductions last year." So the money was paid over that day and word was received that Hei would take him again to the Palace at noon the next day.

At the time appointed Chia set out once more for Hei's house, where the latter joined him and they went to the Palace. After a jolting journey of about half an hour they arrived at the Palace. Although they entered at the same gate as before, the passage they took this time led in ouite a different direction. Nor did they come to that solid-looking brick house on the foundation of marble. Instead, they were taken to a gorgeously painted new building. On their way they met a number of eunuchs who nodded to Hei familiarly. He seemed so well known to them that not once was he asked any question. As they entered the compound of the painted building, Chia was cautioned to keep perfectly quiet. There was a kind of covered porch just inside the main entrance, where Hei left Chia standing and entered the house himself on tip-toe. A few moments later, he reappeared and told Chia that the Chief Eunuch had just got out of bed and was dressing. So they had to wait on the porch.

The place was perfectly quiet and the attendants went about in silence. It was awe inspiring and really majestic. Chia began to envy Hei for having such a powerful uncle. Ah, what opportunities were offered to a eunuch's nephew! It was strange to him that Hei should be willing to live the life of a civilian while he had such a chance of a brilliant official career. Of course he did not know that it paid Hei better to remain the civilian he was than to be an official. It was in fact a business without capital. Chia did not know all that and so he admired him. In his admiration he forgot the opinion he had entertained of him only yesterday.

There was no sign that the eunuch was ready to see the waiting pair even after an interval of half an hour. Instead, word was given

to bring a meal. To Chia's amazement, a long line of junior eunuchs came silently through the compound and into the main house, each carrying a tray on which a bowl was placed. He began to realize the saying 'A servant of the Prime Minister is an official of the seventh rank.' If a servant of the Prime Minister is of the seventh rank, he thought, then a servant of the Emperor must be equal to officials of the first rank, and the chief of the Empress Dowager's servants must naturally be extremely powerful. No wonder that the Chief Eunuch lived like an Emperor and was nearly as powerful.

After the meal was over and tea was served, which took more than half an hour, a junior eunuch came and motioned Hei and Chia to enter. With his heart in his mouth, Chia reverently entered the house in the wake of Hei. He expected the house to be well decorated, imperially furnished and full of curios and ornaments of value. But he was puzzled to see that the room, save for a table and a few chairs, was quite empty. In one of the chairs at the right side of the table sat a man in an ordinary silk robe. He was sipping a cup of tea, and a tea-pot was placed close at hand. These were the only things on the table except the bulky flat hand of the man.

He did not seem to notice the entrance of his nephew and Chia but kept sipping away with his eyes fixed on his cup. Hei and Chia stood quietly for fully five minutes, not daring to disturb him until he asked casually why the visitors had not come in. Hei then took a step forward and said, "The man Chia is here doing you obeisance." Taking the hint thus given him, Chia knelt down on the ground and knocked his head on the brick floor four times. The Chief Eunuch, however, did not move so much as a muscle. He merely said "Get up please. You must excuse me for not returning the ceremony as I am too old to do so." He then told Hei to give Chia a chair and motioned him to sit down. After going through the regular performance of declining the seat, Chia adopted a half-sitting posture. This was to show his great respect for the Chief Eunuch. When asked how his father was, Chia stood up and said that his father was well, under the blessing of the Chief Eunuch, and added, "My father sends his respectful greetings to you, venerable uncle." The eunuch was not well pleased with this way of addressing him. So he turned round and asked Hei if Chia was the son of Chia Siao-chih, the Provincial Treasurer of Honan.

When Hei answered him in the affirmative he said to Chia in a joking manner "Why, your father called me uncle once. If you call me uncle too, would not our relationship be confused?" Chia did not know how to reply to that question, and so kept on saying "eh, um," for a few seconds. Fortunately the eunuch did not press him for an answer. He told his nephew to take Chia outside to rest a while, and assured him that Chia would be allowed to come into the Palace as often as he liked, and that he would not stand on ceremony with them as they were all his children now. This last sentence was considered a great favour, fully worth the 40,000 taels Chia had spent, as the eunuch had now openly acknowledged Chia to be his child or grandchild. Chia, however, did not know it until he went home and told Huang about what had happened. Huang congratulated him and said that after all the 40,000 taels were not too much, nor vainly spent.

CHAPTER XVI

More Money is Extracted.

Upon the return of Chia to his house he was told by the servant that a stranger, by the name of Pao, had called that afternoon. The man, said the servant, would not tell what his mission was, but he was careful to make it understood that he was sent by the Grand Councillor Hua, and left word that he would call again that evening. This bit of unexpected news made Chia behave like a lunatic. He cursed the servant and then cursed himself for having stayed too long at Huang's. If he had come straight home, he thought, he might have met the man. Then he gave word that the stranger was to be admitted when he came again.

The man came at about eight o'clock, a diminutive looking fellow with a yellow face and small narrow eyes. He was in full official costume, with fan case, spectacle case, watch case, silk purse and emergency girdle tassels hanging all about his waist. A pair of black spectacles was perched on the top of his nose. This ornament was, however, taken off its uneasy perch as soon as the man entered Chia's guest room. Instead of bowing or 'ch'ing-an' according to the usual custom, he knelt and kowtowed. Of course Chia had to kneel down too and return the courtesy.

When tea was offered and they had sat down, Chia asked the new guest his honourable name. He told Chia that his name was Sung-ying, and that he was the brother of Pao Sung-liang, the Grand Councillor's son's private tutor. Having been told by his brother that Chia was soon to be appointed to an important post, he had come over to see if Chia would not give him a job. When asked if the Grand Councillor knew of his coming, he said he had seen him a few times. In fact it was Grand Councillor Hua who suggested that he call. Chia then inquired if he had a letter from Hua, and was told that the Councillor had promised to send the letter by a special servant. During their conversation Pao mentioned that the Councillor was exceedingly pleased with the pair of snuff jars Chia had presented him, and added that when the Councillor showed him the pair he said that he considered them to be the best he over had possessed and, if possible, he wished to get one pair more. Chia, being eager to catch any bit of good news, remembered what Pao said about Hua's delight in the pair he had given him, but missed the last sentence about wanting another pair.

One thing which set Chia thinking was Pao's knowledge of the whole affair. He thought Pao must be a bosom friend of the Grand Councillor, or he could not have learned all these secrets. Unless he was much trusted the Councillor would not have shown him the jars in the way he did. So he decided that Pao was not a man to be slighted or refused. He believed that Pao, being eager to get a position as soon as he himself had got one, would be only too glad to

help him and and so would make an excellent channel of communication between him and the Grand Councillor. Accordingly, he promised Pao that he would surely give him a position and wished very much that he would come over as soon as possible for a visit. He told Pao that he had many things which he wanted to consult him about and that he would be welcome to share his own house. So it was decided that Pao should inform the Councillor and move over, if possible, two days later.

Happy as an innocent child, Chia went to Huang's place and told him all about the case. Huang, however, was not so enthusiastic. He questioned Chia about Pao minutely and decided that he was a genuine messenger from the Grand Councillor. He told Chia that it was the proper thing to do to offer the man a place to live, but he was doubtful whether he was earnest in his wish to secure a position. He then suddenly asked Chia if he knew what was meant by telling him that the Councillor wished for another pair of snuff jars.

"You don't mean to say he expects me to present him with another pair?" asked Chia.

"That is just it," answered Huang; "what he wants is that you give him two more jars."

"I don't mind spending a couple of thousand taels more, but where in the world could I find another pair like those I gave?" said Chia.

"Suppose you call at Liu's shop. He may have one pair more to sell," suggested Huang.

"You are right," said Chia, getting up to go.

"I would like to hear all about it, old friend," called out Huang after him.

"All right," Chia called back, as he left Huang's house and made his way to the curio shop.

Entering Liu's shop he at once asked Liu if he had one more pair of snuff jars similar to the one he had sold to him some days ago. Liu in reply asked Chia if he was going to make presents to another high official. Chia thought he would deceive Liu by telling him that he wanted them himself. But Liu, having received word from headquarters, knew whom they were for. He told Chia that he had one other pair but as he had kept them for more than 20 years he did not want to part with them. He was, however, willing to show his old customer this precious pair. He went into his room and brought forth a pair of jars which he handed to Chia to inspect. Chia was amazed, for it was a pair exactly like that he had bought for the Grand Councillor, Nor did he hesitate to comment on the fact.

"It is very strange," he said, "that there should be no difference whatever between this pair and the pair I bought the other day."

"Oh no," said Liu, "you are mistaken. You remember the other pair was much duller in colour. This is a far better pair."

"Well, how much do you want for them?" asked Chia.

"Look here" said Liu, "this pair is not for sale. But as you are a privileged customer I will let you have them at the cost price of Tls. 8,000."

"But this is exactly the same kind of stuff as the others. I don't see why you want so much," said Chia.

"As I told you just now," said the dealer, these are my own jars and they not for sale. If you really want them you can have them at the price I quoted, but otherwise I am not anxious to part with them."

Seeing the uselessness of arguing with the curio dealer Chia made an excuse and left the shop. As he could not make head or tail of the affair he returned to the banker's place. Huang rocked with laughter when he heard Chia's story.

"Now, did you say the pair of jars you saw were exactly the same as the pair you bought?" he asked.

"Yes", answered Chia, "I am as sure of it as my name is Chia Yun-hseng".

"Very well" said Huang, "now do you think nature is so regular in its habits as to make two pieces of jade for you exactly the same? No. Then the pair you saw a little while ago was the same pair you bought the other day."

"You mean to say that they are making a fool of me?" asked Chia.

"Well, if they take you for a fool, why don't you pretend that you are a fool and buy the pair for the Grand Councillor?", asked Huang.

Chia now understood and called himself a real fool for not seeing through it sooner. He asked the banker to go with him this time as he himself had made a blunder the last time. A few minutes later they were at the curio dealer's again. He welcomed them with outstretched hands and said in a jubilant manner that he was sure that Chia would come back. So, he said, he had already selected some other things that must go with the snuff jars. He then showed them a jade ring, a peacock feather holder and a string of white Han jade beads in addition to the snuff jars. He asked for 10,000 taels; which was agreed to without any more fuss. Liu was again asked to be the bearer but this time without extra fees.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN IMPERIAL AUDIENCE.

When the day fixed for Chia to attend the Imperial audience came near, he had only 5,000 taels left. Yet he had received no assurance, beyond the promises of Huang and Hei, of any definite official post. He began to be anxious and importunate. Huang and Hei still kept up a hopeful appearance and warned Chia that he must not be in too much of a hurry. Although, they pointed out, posts could be got by the payment of money, some semblance of official procedure had to be observed and he must wait till after the audience before the Councillors and the Chief Eunuch would be in a position to help him. Chia, therefore, spent the next seven or eight days in visiting questionable houses and making new friends. Meanwhile he had learned a great deal about Peking ways and the foolishness of spending money in giving haphazard presents. He even began to doubt the character of Huang, his most trusted friend, although he did not show it either by words or action.

At last the long-looked for day came when he was to be brought before the Emperor. He was told to be at the gate of the Palace at 5 o'clock in the morning, as His Majesty usually sees his officials at the 'fifth hour'—day-break. But it was not until eight o'clock that Chia and the others were taken into the Palace. As it was the first 'introductory audience' the ceremony was very brief. A Court Marshal took them, twelve in all, to a big hall, after they had been instructed in the procedure to be followed. They formed a line at the front of the hall on the raised platform of marble. At a given sign, a shake of the Marshal's sleeve, they all knelt down, and each, beginning from the right, gave his own name and rank in a sing-song voice. After this they were told to get up and leave the marble platform, taking the flight of steps on the western side, and returned to the gate of the Palace.

The next day an Imperial decree was issued ordering Chia to proceed to Shantung as an Expectant Taotai, and to attend a 'special audience' before his departure, the date for which was fixed. Chia was disgusted and thoroughly put out, He had expected to be exempted from the 'Expectancy.' He at once called on Huang and asked him how it was that he had still to be 'Expectant' after paying so much money. Huang assured him that he was more surprised than Chia himself, and promised that he would see Hei the first thing in the afternoon. At the same time he asked Chia to get ready for the special audience.

According to custom Chia was expected to call on the important officials after he had been introduced to the Emperor. This he did that afternoon. As he did not know exactly what the special audience would be like, he intended to inquire of some of the Councillors. He hoped that they would give him the necessary information, as they

had accepted presents from his hands. The first one he called upon was Hua, the curio enthusiast. Chia asked him if it was necessary to knock his head on the ground when his father's name was mentioned during the audience. The Councillor, as though he did not hear the entire sentence, said that 'knock more and say less' is the trade secret of officials. Chia then asked him more plainly whether it was necessary to knock his head on the ground whenever the Emperor mentioned his father's name. To this question the Councillor replied that he must not say anything unless he was spoken to and that he must not forget to knock his head when it was necessary to do so. He also told Chia that it did not matter much if he knocked his head even when it was unnecessary. The old man then lifted up his cup, which was a sign for Chia to leave, as he had finished his advice.

Not satisfied with Hua's information, Chia called on Wang, a new Grand Councillor. After due ceremony Chia broached the subject of knocking the head. Instead of answering Chia's question, Wang asked if he had seen Hua and whether he had asked him that question. When told he had, he said that Hua's advice ought to be followed as he was a man of much experience. The next Grand Councillor Chia called upon was even worse in his answers. In fact he made no answer at all. He pretended to be deaf and gave answers far wide of the mark. This last Councillor was well known for his peculiar but effective ways. His nickname was 'Crystal Egg' on account of his evasive tactics in the execution of his duty. In his daily audience with the Emperor his answer was invariably "yes, yes" when he was asked for his opinion on a policy. Whenever the Emperor asked him to furnish or suggest any plan, he would knock his head and say that he was deaf. The Emperor, seeing he was so old, did not take his manners very seriously.

Fortunately Chia had made the acquaintance of a Minor Councillor during his short sojourn in Peking. He secured all the necessary information from this man, who told him how he should walk, where he should kneel and what he should say. This was quite necessary as on such an occasion as an Imperial audience one must not say one word too much or one word too little. Chia went home, wrote the instructions down on a sheet of paper and committed them to memory.

On the day fixed, Chia went to the Palace early in the morning as usual. In due time he was summoned before the Emperor, but this time he knelt much nearer to the throne than the last time. After his kowtowing nine times on the ground, the Emperor asked him a few questions. To his great relief the questions asked were very much like those he had learned from the Minor Councillor with few exceptions. The following are the questions and answers:

"Your name is Chia Yun-hseng?"
"Yes."
"What was your last official post?"
"Your Servant was on the Honan river embankment work."
"For how long?"
"Half a year."
"How about the conditions in the flooded districts?"

"The people suffered a great deal at first, but by the blessing of your Majesty the flood has now subsided and the people have returned to their homes."

"Have you any friends in Shantung?"

"No."

"Well, you can do your duty better."

"Yes."

"Have you heard of the disturbance in Lingchow?"

"Yes, your servant has heard about it."

"The officials there were very careless."

"Yes."

"You must follow the doctrines of the sages and love the people when you come into office."

"Yes."

"You are acquainted with foreign affairs, I suppose?"

"Yes, a little."

"You must take great care in dealing with foreigners."

"Yes, your servant remembers."

"When are you leaving?"

"Your servant plans to leave as soon as he has received Your Majesty's instructions."

"Enough. You may retire and rest."

Thus ended the Imperial audience.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BLACKMAIL.

Chia Taotai became more anxious after the special Imperial audience. For according to custom he must report himself to the Governor of Shantung, to whose province he had been allotted. He had, therefore, either to get a special appointment in the quickest way possible or suffer the delays of waiting for preferment in order of seniority; or he might resort to further bribing in the provincial capital. The last course he knew would be both expensive and uncertain. Besides, the appointment of a Taotai must come from Peking. Should he decide to go to the province, he would have to leave an agent in the Capital; and that, he had no doubt, would cost him more money than if it were done by himself. The second course was entirely out of the question. The only course left open to him was the first. But that apparently was hopeless, too.

He called on Huang the banker several times, but by chance he happened to be out. This made Chia furious. He returned home in an irritable state of mind. Just at this juncture, as bad luck would have it, Chia's scribe asked him for some money as, he said, he had not even enough to go into a tea shop. This reminded Chia that he had not paid his men during the last month. The thought irritated him still more, and he burst out in sudden fury and told Shih, the scribe, that he need not fear his running away, and that he was a 'rice pot' anyhow. When the scribe complained of the manner used toward him, Chia told him that his manner was born in him, and if he did not like it he could leave.

Shih, being a scholar, had neither the wish nor the courage to quarrel, still less fight. He simply turned round and walked out of the room and into the street, muttering to himself that he had never seen such manners. He was deeply hurt. His feeling was such that he would readily have committed suicide. For what a scholar prizes and takes most care to protect is his personal diginty. A well-known proverb says. 'scholars may be killed but not insulted.' This must have been in the mind of Shih when he left Chia's house. He wandered about the streets with bent head, not noticing where he went.

Suddenly he was roused by a sharp slap on his shoulder. He turned his head and looked into the face of his clansman Kao Po. He stared for a moment and dropped his head again. This demeanour struck his friend dumb. He thought Shih had gone mad or crazy. He asked what had happened to make him so absent-minded, but Shih gave no answer. Thinking he was seriously ill Kao hailed a passing mule cart and took him to his own lodging, which was in a guild. He was going to send for a doctor when Shih burst out weeping. Hard pressed by Kao, Shih told him what had happened and how Chia had treated him.

This made Kao so indignant that he vowed he would obtain vengeance. Strange to say this had the effect of bringing Shih thoroughly back to his own senses. He implored Kao not to make any fuss as people would laugh at him if it became known to their fellow-provincials. This made Kao all the more determined to teach Chia a lesson, as he put it. He told Shih that it was foolish to swallow the insult and a disgrace to let a ninny so treat a Hangchow man. "No," he said, "Chia must know that Hangchow people are not to be treated like dogs." So a man was sent to Chia's place with Shih's card to fetch his luggage. A subscription was started among the members of the Guild to pay Shih's passage home. This was done without much difficulty as the provincial spirit was then very strong.

The next day Kao went to see his teacher, the Grand Councillor Hsu. This Hsu was the person already mentioned and known as the 'Crystal Egg,' a native of Hangchow. He shook his head and advised Kao not to have anything to do with it, when he had heard the story. He argued that there were so many Hangchow people in Peking that if he began to stir up trouble there would be no end to it. This advice did not discourage Kao a bit, for he knew Hsu's ways, and had come prepared. So he took another line of attack.

"But really, Sir," Kao said, "Chia is an awfully mean and unscrupulous man. He not only despises us Hangchow people, but he said something very impertinent about you which I wouldn't dare even to mention."

"What could Chia have said about me?" answered the Councillor, "Don't you know officials are targets for gossip?"

"But, my teacher," insisted Kao, "it is not gossip. It is deliberate insult. He has derided you many a time and called you —well—."

"Go on, what did he call me?" inquired Hsu, with rather more interest.

"I would not dare to name it but for your order," protested Kao. "He compared you to a painted rice-pot." (Good for nothing but display).

"Oh, that's nothing," said the Councillor, "it is not worth while to lose one's temper with him for such a small offence."

"Of course I would not dare to bother you so much if Chia had not confirmed his opinion by his acts," continued Kao. "Why, Chia so despises you, my teacher, that, although he has given over 20,000 taels to Hua and much more to the Chief Eunuch, he has not even done you the honour of giving you a small present. Of course you never cared for a present; but it was his duty to do so. His failure to pay you due respect is pure spite."

"How do you know that he gave so much to Hua?" asked Councillor Hsu.

"Shih, Chia's scribe, told me all about it," said Kao triumphantly, and with a few more words he persuaded his teacher to let him draw up a draft petition censuring Chia's conduct for bribery and leading a profligate life while waiting for an appointment, and requesting his immediate dismissal from official rank. Of course this was a scheme of blackmail, which was understood between Kao and his teacher.

Having written the draft, he put it into his pocket and left the Councillor's house for the banker's shop.

Huang, the banker, was surprised to see Kao, for they had never had any transactions before. However, he invited Kao into his private study and asked his business. A few words were sufficient to show Huang what was intended after he had seen the draft of the impeachment petition. As Huang was himself involved in the case, he begged Kao to hold over the petition for a day or two. He guaranteed that Chia would apologise and make fit amends for his conduct. After much bargaining and many arguments it was finally agreed to let the matter drop provided Chia would pay the Councillor 3,000 taels, Shih 2,000 and Kao 1,000 besides 1,000 more for the Councillor's servants, porter, and retinue.

Chia, at first, would not pay the exactions, protesting that he had only 5,000 taels left in the bank. But after much threatening and persuasion he agreed to borrow 5,000 more from Huang the banker at 20 per cent. interest. As Chia's father was a Provincial Treasurer Huang did not hesitate to lend him the money, especially after he had made so much out of commissions. The money was paid the next day and the petition was thrown into the fire.

The most fortunate man was Shih, the scribe. With the money obtained through the efforts of his fellow provincial, he bought a minor rank, which still left him a good sum for fitting himself out to occupy a position in one of the Boards as a clerk, a berth secured for him by the Councillor Hsu, who did this to show his gratitude to Shih for the three thousand taels.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE END OF CHIA.

If there was any one who felt bitter towards the world it was Chiā Taotai on that day when he had to borrow 5,000 taels from Huang to pay the blackmailers. To him Peking was the most wicked place in the world, every man a devil and every place a snare. So far he had spent fully 150,000 taels, and yet no result could be seen. He was desperate but helpless. For four or five days he did not leave his own room. He brooded over the misfortunes that had befallen him. Once he wrote a telegram to his father asking for help, only to tear it up a few minutes later. He was afraid it would be a disgrace to confess his failure in such a way. At last he determined that he would ask some of his schoolmates, many of whom were in official service in Chihli province, for monetary help. So he wrote and sent out many letters to his more intimate friends.

After nearly a week Huang called, in person. Chia was somewhat taken aback for he had concluded that Huang was one of the Peking cut-throats and would hardly call on him now after taking all his money, unless it were to ask him for the return of the loan. It was plain, however, that Huang had not come for money, for he seemed full of cheer and good humour. Without disclosing at once what his real errand was, he chatted in a friendly way to Chia, and remarked that he had grown thin.

"You must have been worrying yourself to death these lāst few days," he said. "Look in the glass and see how ill you look. I am afraid you will go off your head or fall sick if you do not try to take your mind off your worries, and go out a bit. Come along, we will go and have a stroll."

"It is very kind of you," said Chia, "but I would rather not go out, thank you."

"There," said Huang, laughingly, "you are not going to hāng yourself, are you? I am going to be arbitrary to-day and take you by force. Where shall we go—the theatre? Good. Let us go straight away; otherwise there will be no seats." So saying, he half pulled and half lifted Chia off the 'k'ang' on which he was reclining, and made him dress himself. Half an hour later they were in the theatre enjoying the songs of a popular singer named Shiao Chiao Tien.

After the performance was over Huang took Chiā to a place called Pien Yi Fang, a restaurant famous for its roast duck. There they had a long chat over the delicacies Huang had ordered. By that time Chia was completely disarmed, and thoroughly believed that he did the banker an injustice by entertaining suspicions of him. Gradually Chia was led to pour out his heart's secrets to Huang, and told him how bothered he was about his critical financial position, and how discouraged at failing to secure an official post.

Huang told him not to bother his honest head. "As to money," he said, "just call on me whenever you want more." He assured Chia that he would stand by him and help him through. There was ene thing, however, which he wanted to make plain to Chia: he must not rely on what he had spent to secure an appointment.

"But I thought the Grand Councillors and the Chief Eunuch would help to give me a position after I had presented them with gifts," said Chia in dispair.

"You have been mistaken, my good brother," rejoined Huang. "The money you have paid was for audience presents, which are an entirely different thing. If you wish to have a post definitely given to you, a definite understanding must be reached before the money is paid."

"I am discouraged and disgusted with the whole thing," answered Chia. "I don't believe it would ever be possible to buy a position."

"That we can't say," said Huang, "but I have helped many a man successfully, and I believe your case is just as hopeful."

"Tell me then," said Chia, "what is the proper way to bargain for a position? I want nothing but a definite appointment."

"There is a way now open to you, but I am afraid you would think it too expensive," said Huang.

"The question is, whether the way would really lead to anything," said Chia.

"The 'Door' is perfectly trustworthy, but it would cost you 50,000 taels."

"Tell me the way first, if you please," Chia said.

Huang then told him that the Imperial Household Department was in urgent need of funds to complete the works of a new park; and it was open to anyone to contribute towards the expenses in return for rewards in the form of rank or position. He told Chia that this was unlike the presentation of formal gifts, in that it was a direct bargain for a post. He also said that if he were Chia he would borrow the money and get the job, as he could certainly make enough out of it to repay his debts within three months.

"Yes," said Chia. "but where to borrow the money?"

"Here you are," said Huang; "have I not promised to help you through with the business? Although I have not the money myself I could borrow it from my friends. Don't you worry," he concluded.

So it was arranged that Huang should borrow the necessary money for Chia and arrange the whole matter for him as well.

At that time there was a certain Sze Shiao-jen, an Expectant Prefect, living next door to Huang. He had come to Peking with a large sum of money to buy a position. But owing to the misfortune that the high official who recommended him had himself become involved in a serious embezzlement case, he had decided not to push his scheme for the time being. To this man Huang went, upon taking leave of Chia. With his usual plausibility he persuaded the man to lend his money to Chia at an interest of 7/10ths per cent. per month. It was stipulated that Huang should be responsible for the loan and the promissory note should be made out in Huang's name, which was the very thing Huang wanted.

Having arranged the loan with the expectant Prefect, Huang returned to Chia's place and told him that a certain friend of his was willing to lend the money, but the interest was very high. He told Chia how difficult it had been to arrange the loan, and how the man would not lend the money until he had undertaken to be personally responsible for it. He made Chia understand that his friend asked 2,5 per cent. interest per month. Chia was not willing to pay such high interest, and asked Huang to drop the matter. Seeing that his plan was going to fall through, Huang told Chia that he would see his friend again about it. He assured him that money could be got elsewhere if this man refused. Finally, after many trips, which were unnecessary except as a blind to deceive Chia, it was arranged that the banker should borrow 55,000 taels from Sze and lend it to Chia at an interest of 2 per cent. per month. Thus the banker, by a little juggling made 1.3 per cent. on the 55,000 taels, without putting in a single cash.

As to the contribution, it is hardly necessary to say that Huang made another 5,000 taels out of the transaction. The money was paid to a Prince, who was in charge of the work, and a receipt was obtained for a sum of 20,000 taels. This, Huang explained, could not be helped, as if the Prince could make no profit out of it he would not consider the case.

Yet, what did Chia get after all? Three months later he was appointed Acting Taotai of Chefoo with the brevet rank of Senior Expectant Taotai, entitled to the first chance of appointment. This post Chia held for three months, at the end of which it was given to some one else, who paid a higher price, and he was once more without an official post. This, of course, did not happen until Chia had returned the loan!

CHAPTER XX.

A Much Esteemed Magistrate.

Although the corruptions and the intrigues, and the shameless and open way in which they were practised, all afford good material for the pen and are entertaining as gossip, the conditions of the officials selected from among the scholar class are just as amusing, and in many cases just as corrupt. To say the least they are peculiar and proud, although I say it who am one of them. I used to hold their views and was as conservative as they, but my natural love for books, and especially new books, saved me from falling into the deadly habits of an inactive and conceited scholar. I know of men who are so ignorant that they believe that the old classics contain all the knowledge of the world, and would scoff at the idea of gaining knowledge by reading other books. Although they do not even know whether the Mongolians sleep on a mud 'k'ang' or a wooden bed, yet they say and actually believe that "the 'hsiu-t'sai' knows the affairs of the world without going out of his front door." (A *hsiu-t'sai* is a scholar who has passed the prefectural literary examination). A certain scholar of Chekiang, a well known man of learning, as he was considered by the gentry, once abused me for lending an ear to the barbarous heresies of the 'western devils;' but when I asked him if he knew how 'elephant-skin' (indiarubber) was made, he laughed and said "of course it is cut from the hide of the elephant." To men of this type the reason why the foreigners carry walking sticks is because their trousers are so tight that when they stumble they need sticks to help them to rise again. One man insisted that England could not be farther than India, because according to the books the land beyond the Land of Buddha (India) was heaven, or the Western Heaven of the Gods. When I reminded him of the fact that the particular book he mentioned was not really a part of Confucius' teachings, he said it expressed the teachings of Confucius!

The most laughable thing is the way in which women are regarded by some of my scholarly friends. They seem to think that women are much inferior in standing to men, despite the fact that many of them are afraid of their wives. Of course I do not believe it is right to give the women too much power, as the foreigners do. They seem to be so afraid of the ladies that even their slightest wish is met and satisfied. Neither do I think it is right for women to go about too much, as their proper place is the home. On the other hand it is a bad custom to despise women; after all, my 'Merciful Mother' was also a woman. But some of my fellow scholars have peculiar notions about them.

I know a man who thinks it outrageous for his wife to keep her clothing in the same box with his, as he says it would bring him bad luck. Once he made a great fuss and quarrelled with his wife because some one put a woman's coat on top of his official jacket, by

mistake. On another occasion he gave away his cap, for the sole reason that his little son, when playing with his mother, had put it on her head.

Another class of scholars pay much attention to their food and clothes. They hold that a man's morality is measured by the way he lives. This is true until we know what is meant by "the way he lives," or rather what it means to them. A certain magistrate Lu was known throughout the province as a most upright man, and no doubt he was. But he chose to show his uprightness by living like a beggar. His daily food was rice, vegetables and beancurd, Very rarely, at most three times in one month, did he eat meat. Neither would he wear silk—the only silk dress he had was his official costume, which he would have dispensed with if he could. A pair of shoes, made of silk by the way, did him service year in and year out for three years. As to furs, all he had was a sheep-skin outer gown which he inherited from his father. All these and many things more were, to him, the essentials of a high morality. He said that Confucius taught frugality as a great virtue when he said "Be frugal and love men," and also "Instead of being extravagant I had rather be frugal." Not only did he practise frugality in his own affairs, but he also practised it in public affairs. For instance, he would not allow any money to be spent on the repair of his Yamen, which was in a terrible condition of decay. Once a foreigner mistook it for a beggar house when he was passing through the city and saw the place, having heard of the beggar houses of China.

This magistrate Lu would have got on all right had not the scheming gentry seen their opportunity and begun to deceive him. As a scholar he always remembered the maxim that 'an able official must see that the place under his jurisdiction is so peaceful that it is possible to leave the doors open during the night.' He, therefore, set about making the people settle their quarrels without going to the Yamen. Whenever a fight or a quarrel was brought before him he gave the parties concerned a lecture and sent them away without giving any punishment. This sort of settlement he called "conversion by virtue." This was a good opportunity, of which the members of the gentry were not slow to take advantage. They quietly told the people, the country folk, that the magistrate did not like to see any petty cases brought before him, and that he had given them word to settle such cases out of court. In this way they made a great deal of money, while the magistrate never knew what was going on outside of his Yamen. The Yamen runners welcomed the new situation, because they knew that they would not get a cent extra beyond their regular 3,000 cash, if the magistrate kept the judicial power in his own hands, whereas they could share some of the spoils as long as the gentry acted in his stead.

In return for his kindness in letting them squeeze the people, the gentry presented him with a tablet on which were engraved the words "Loves his people like his sons." This pleased him very much, and as there was really nothing for him to do, he often invited some of them to tea and wine. For although he was particular about the money spent for other things, he was prodigal in what he spent in drinks. He was a scholar and a poet, and to a Chinese scholar poetry and wine are two necessities of life.

His slovenliness, however, became known to his superior, who after making careful investigations and finding his character immaculate, finally decided to transfer him to some other place. Magistrate Lu did not protest against the decision of his superior, although he was reluctant to leave his beloved and well disciplined, or rather 'converted' people, as he called them. But the gentry saw their danger and sent a strongly worded petition, supposed to be signed by the people of the city, to the Governor of the Province, protesting against the removal of their fatherly magistrate. They eulogized the virtues and able administration of Lu, and threatened, if he were removed, to reject the new magistrate. Of course this puzzled the provincial authorities, and they at once sent another official to investigate the question. The local gentry were equal to the occasion. They and a lot of their underlings were ready when the investigator arrived. They rushed on to the boat as soon as he reached the city and nearly capsized it in their assumed eagerness to present their petitions. That was all that was necessary to convince the investigator that the magistrate was really much esteemed by his people, and he promised that he would do all he could to let them have their way. So the gentry succeeded in retaining Lu in office, and in keeping the rice bowls in their hands.

But Lu did not remain in that city very long, for the Governor was so pleased with his conduct that he made special mention of it, in his annual report, and asked special promotion for him, which was granted. As this was a promotion for Lu, the gentry could do nothing to keep him. But in order to show the new magistrate, who had just arrived to take Lu's place, how well they were pleased with Lu's methods, they got up a procession of peasants to send him off. In the procession were carried ten thousand name-umbrellas, flags and tablets, which the gentry had presented to him. To show their love for the old magistrate they took off his shoes and gave him a pair of new ones—which he sadly needed. The old shoes were put in a box and hung up over the city gate, the south gate, as a memorial. All this was done to give a hint to the new official. For should he prove strict and obstinate, the gentry would settle him by burning paper money along the route when he left his post. It was not seldom, in those days, that it was necessary for the magistrate to leave at nightfall, and as quietly as possible, for fear of the embarrassing tricks of the gentry.

CHAPTER XXI.

Some Clever Magistrates.

The case of Magistrate Lu was what we may call an example of an extreme class of the scholastic officials. There is another class which is at another extreme. This class is usually crafty and clever, and sometimes really brilliant in trying, or rather judging law cases. Twenty years ago this was almost all that was required of magistrates. It is true that they should also know how to collect land taxes and rice taxes for the Manchu soldiers, but as success in tax-collecting depended entirely upon the ability of the Yamen runners and 'Ti-paos' or 'Tu' it was only a secondary consideration. ('Ti-pao,' commonly called 'Ti-fang,' is a local official underling who functions as a sort of out-station man for the magistrate; he settles the small cases such as quarrels or debts, signs all deeds of sale or mortgage as a witness, and produces the men of his village or district when called upon by the magistrates. Properly he is called 'Chia,' but usually he also functions as the 'Tu,' who looks after the land deeds and taxes.)

During my tenure of office as Prefect of Yochow I came across a man who was exceedingly able in pronouncing judgment, and he was a scholar. It was his habit to give lengthy judgments in classical style no matter how trifling the cases were. Once one of the 'Ti-paos' was found guilty of illegally sitting as an official, and securing confessions by torture. The magistrate, whose name was Yang Cheng, gave the following judgment: "The 'Ti-pao' is the magistrate's eyes and ears, and when he is corrupt the people suffer. Now Li-sheng (the 'Ti-pao'), having secured a bone, coveted the meat of the heavenly goose. He sat on the judgment seat like the King of the Underworld and used tortures only fit for the infernal inhabitants. Before me he was like a rat before a cat; before the ignorant country folk he was at once transformed into a tiger of the mountains. Thinking the Yamen was as black as night, he became bold like the lightning, which penetrates the dark clouds. As he has treated the people like fish and meat he should now be given 400 cakes of flesh (400 strokes on the bare back). As he sat by the judgment desk he will be required to sit by the solitary table for three months (to wear the wooden collar for three months). In order to maintain the dignity he so much desired, the draped table should be placed before him and the instruments of torture hung round his neck. When he has thus served for three months he will be given 400 more cakes to take home. His red fringed hat is hereby taken off. (He is hereby dismissed from office.)"

As to real ability, I know of a man who successfully judged a case which would altogether baffle an ordinary man. A man was accused of illegally living with his neighbour's wife. The man confessed, but the woman insisted that she was the victim of a blackmailing plot and denied having any relations with the man. She accused the men, the accused and the witness, of having attempted to

force her to re-marry, as she was a widow. Evidently the accusation was true, as the man himself had confessed, but it was difficult to get the confession from her own lips which the law required. The magistrate was resourceful and equal to the occasion. He ordered a stool to be brought and placed in the centre of the yard, and the woman was told to stand on top of it. Now that stool was only big enough for one person. Next the magistrate ordered the man to get up there too, at the same time telling them that he believed they were both guilty, but that instead of beating them he had decided to disgrace them in that way for half a day, after which they could go home and be formally married; but the half-day would be reckoned from the moment the man succeeded in getting up on top of the stool; and every time he fell from the stool he would be given twenty lashes with a cane on his bare back. One condition was that he must not push the woman down.

Many times the man tried and failed, and the required number of lashes were given. The woman seemed unmoved at first; she stood her ground firmly. But after a while the man's back began to bleed and he cried out in agony. He implored the woman not to let him suffer more. He told her it was cruel to deny him this little favour, as it would only last half a day. Besides, he added, they could get legally married, and that would be the end of the scandal. The woman began to yield, and let the man hold her hand when trying to get up, and also tried to shift to one side a little bit.

"That is enough," said the magistrate, "you may all go home."

The man and woman were visibly relieved. They kowtowed, and thanked the official for his mercy and grace.

"Just a moment," called out the magistrate, as they were about to leave the Yamen. "I would like to speak to the woman again."

The woman was brought back before the magistrate, who asked her if she would be willing to marry that man on the spot so that the Yamen runners would have no chance to blackmail her again. To this the woman replied that she was willing to do whatever the official ordered. To her confusion, however, the magistrate asked why she was willing to marry a man who had heartlessly accused her of leading an immoral life. Of course she had to confess that she really had lived with the man for over a year, and that she was afraid to confess as she feared she would be cast out by her family. So the necessary confession was secured, and the woman was given two hundred strokes on her cheeks with a sole-shaped piece of leather. The man was dismissed, as he had already received his due punishment.

The case of Magistrate Sze Kung was also interesting. After he first took over the seal of the Magistracy of Chang-lu, he found, among other criminal cases, a case of murder. About twenty persons, including two women and a Buddhist priest, were suspected or otherwise implicated. The records gave the details as follows: On a certain day a vegetable pedlar went into a temple for a rest, and accidentally discovered the corpse of a priest in a pool of blood. He at once gave the alarm and sent for the 'Ti-pao.' The priests of that temple were all arrested, and upon examination it was discovered that the Chief Priest was living an immoral life. He had a woman, who lived in the temple with him, and on her he spent a great deal

of the money belonging to the temple. The murdered man, who was the chief butler of the monastery, had had a dispute with him on account of his refusal to furnish money to satisfy his craving for opium. Words passed between them, and the chief butler left the place in an angry mood. He was found dead the next morning. It transpired that the butler-priest also kept a woman outside, and that he went to the woman's home that night, after the quarrel with the Chief Priest. Suspicion was then cast upon the woman's husband, who was a carpenter, but no evidence could be found against him. It was discovered, however, that he had visited a gambling house, and stayed there until nearly sun-rise the night before, when he left with a few of his fellow gamblers.

The magistrate re-examined the whole case and found as nearly as he could that the priest was killed early in the morning, as the 'Ti-pao' testified to the fact that the corpse was not quite cold when he arrived on the scene. He was quite sure that the carpenter was the real murderer, but could not convict him without real evidence and a personal confession. So he gathered all the prisoners together and told them that he had had a dream the night before, in which the Buddha, before whose image the murder was committed, told him the name of the culprit. But as he was not willing to convict anyone on such evidence, he would send them all to the temple, where the Buddha would mark the murderer on the face.

So they were all taken to the temple and led into the room in which the corpse was discovered. The room was darkened and they had to grope their way in. They were then told to stand close to the wall, which was previously coated with lamp-black, with the palms of their hands pressed against it. The magistrate knelt down and in a solemn voice prayed the Buddha now to reveal the culprit. After a few moments the doors were opened and to the surprise of all the carpenter's face was covered with soot. In his fear he had taken his hands off the wall and rubbed his face in the dark, in the hope of removing the Buddha's marking. He was questioned on the spot, before the Buddha, and confessed that he killed the priest because he caught him leaving his house, after midnight. He was duly punished and the others were set free.

CHAPTER XXII.

A Grand Military Review.

With all its corruptions and amusing tales, the civil official class is not nearly so pitiful and laughable as the military class. With some of them their life could hardly be called an official life at all, and this is especially true of those of the old type. It was a marvel how some of them came to know the art of war. There were no military schools such as we have now. Nor had they any practical training, for the life of a soldier or a military officer used to be a life of idleness. Except on the 1st and 15th of each month, when the roll was called and the soldiers had to gather for about half an hour, there was no drill of any kind. Many of the soldiers, therefore, carried on some sort of business, and went about just as ordinary people did. This was quite necessary, because they only received about 1.5 taels per month out of their regular pay of 3.2 taels, after deducting 1.5 taels for a pair of boots and the rest as exchange discount. They lived, however, fairly decently, by taking what they wanted from the country folk without asking. Wherever a body of soldiers was stationed the chickens in the yards and vegetables in the gardens mysteriously disappeared. Complaining to their officers was useless, as they were afraid that the soldiers would expose their squeeze. By tactfully leaving the soldiers alone, they often managed to owe them their pay for three or four months without much danger.

There was one occasion, however, they all dreaded; that was the grand review day, which occurred once in every three years. It was not so much the strictness of the review which they feared; for although most of the soldiers did not know a thing about fencing or boxing, the one who reviewed them, always the Governor, knew even less than they. What they were afraid of was the reviewer's staff. For if they were not handsomely treated with money, lodging and daily feasts, it was a simple matter for them to suggest to the Governor that the drill was wrong or rusty, which would mean immediate dismissal of the officers responsible.

The Grand Review, though entirely a farce, was nevertheless a grand sight. Thousands of people went to see the show, and the shops gave a holiday. Of course the fuss and excitement were centred round the Grand Reviewer, the Governor. On that day he would get up early in the morning, and be at the review ground at say nine o'clock, so as to show the soldiers what a good example he was to them. The local officials, both civil and military, got up even earlier than he, for they had to be at the gate of the Governor's temporary quarters to 'wait upon him' when he came out. (To 'wait upon him' is literally called in Chinese 'to stand in a row'). After the Governor had left his temporary Yamen, and before he reached the review ground, they had to be at the gate of the ground to wait upon him again. This they accomplished by taking the shorter road and running at top speed.

What attracted the attention of the common people was the Governor's procession. It was prettier than a procession of idols, and much more awe-inspiring. First came two heralds on horse-back blowing their trumpets, then a pair of gongs, two 'clear the way' flags, thirty or forty title boards, headed by a pair of 'silence and respect' boards, eight pairs of advance guards, the flag of the Commander, another pair of gongs, some umbrella-bearers and eight heralds, eight executioners, flags and arrows (symbols of command), a pair of 'tiger flags,' mounted musicians, mounted umbrella-bearers, mounted attendants, incense burners, body guards, the seal bearer and a whole lot of other attendants, forming a procession a mile long. The Governor's chair and the chairs of his staff brought up the rear. As the procession wound its way through the narrow streets, the crowd following it steadily grew until traffic and passage were blocked.

The officials and soldiers were all waiting when the procession arrived at the review ground. The Commander of the troops—a 'Hsieh-t'ai—together with his subordinate, were all in full uniform. They drew up on the right side, in a long row, with the soldiers behind them in a great mass. With the exception of the Commander, who had a servant to do it for him, the other officers each carried a red folder with the bearer's name written on it. This each of them lifted with both hands above his head, and as the Governor's chair passed by, they knelt down on one knee and shouted at the top of their voices "Your humble functionary So and So welcomes your Excellency." The Governor nodded to them, but remained in his chair until he came to the grand review stand, when he left the chair and stood facing the gathered throng for a moment. Then the soldiers, as well as the officers knelt down, and one of the officers shouted in a loud voice: "We pay your Excellency our respects." The Governor's military attendant then answered "Get up," whereupon the soldiers responded in unison "aye." The Governor then retired for a few minutes' rest.

After an interval of about fifteen minutes, and amidst the noise of guns, drums, pipes and bugles, it was announced that the Governor was ready for the review. He was escorted to the Commander-in-Chief's seat in the centre of a raised platform, and sat down behind a red-cloth-draped table on which were placed red and black inks, brushes, sounding block (used to bang the table when the official wished to be severe), the Imperial Decree, seal, and flags of command and arrows of command (the former used when giving instructions, the latter used when giving punishments or summons). The officers then went up to the platform in bunches, according to their ranks, and bowed or bent one knee as the case might be, and then took their stand on each side of the Governor.

The first thing was the roll-call. First came the officers. They were called one by one, and answered by going up to the platform and bending one knee. Now according to the roll there should have been something like 4,000 men, and if the names were called one by one it would have been found that there were at least one thousand names whose owners only existed in the imagination of the military chiefs. Fortunately the Governor had no patience to hear the roll called, and the work was divided among his staff. Some of the soldiers had to answer the names of others, in addition to their own. They avoided detection by changing their uniform and going to another tent, where

another officer was calling the roll. Of course the underlings knew what was going on; but as they had been previously bribed they said nothing.

The 'Hsieh-t'ai' (District Commander), who was in full uniform, which consisted of a helmet, embroidered coat of mail and silk boots, with a sword and a bow hanging on the left and right side of the waist belt, respectively, came forward with a small flag in his hand. He bent one knee and asked the Governor to give his commands. After being told that his Excellency would first see the foreign-drilled soldiers and then the formations, gunnery, cane-shield corps, archery, boxing and fencing, the District Commander handed the 'flag of command' to the adjutant Captain. This officer carried the flag to a mud mound and waved it in the air for a few moments. This was the signal for the soldiers to move.

Three cannon were fired, and a company of soldiers came marching in with muzzle-loaders on their shoulders, each keeping his own step. They formed a long line, two deep, in front of the platform. The adjutant Captain, having come down from the mound, went up to the platform and asked, on bended knee, "Will it please your Excellency to review the foreign drill?" The Governor's military attaché then shouted "Commence the drill." This command was again responded to by the soldiers with a unanimous "aye." The adjutant then stepped to one side to give the Governor a better view. The soldiers marched up and down the square, which was roped in for this purpose, two or three times, broke into two squads, and fired a volley into the air. They then marched back to the starting point and saluted the Governor by bending the knee and saying " 'Ch'ing-an' your Excellency." The Governor took up a huge writing brush, made a red mark on the sheet of paper which lay before him, and nodded to his attaché, who immediately shouted "retire." The soldiers then marched off with drums beating and horns blowing.

Next came the most spectacular part of the review, the formations, in which all the soldiers took part. There were about three thousand soldiers in all. But most of them—say two thousand—were loafers gathered in a few weeks before. They were on job work and paid by the day. They had had about two or three weeks' training, which was quite sufficient for the purpose. For with the formation of troops all that was required was to remember the men immediately before and behind you and to keep company with them wherever they went, and do whatever they did. The old soldiers were placed so that they would always be in the lead or bring up the rear.

The first formation was a long line which was called the Snake Formation. Lead by an officer holding a flag, the formation crept along in a zigzag way until the head came nearly opposite the flagstaff, when a signal gun was fired and the formation broke into three parts, each under a leader with a flag. This was called the Formation of Three Elements; heaven, earth and men. After some movements the formation again broke, this time into eight parts, which was termed the Formation of Eight Diagrams. The soldiers ran about so much that it was impossible to see whether they were moving about properly. They managed, however, to stick to their leaders, and finally came to their places. As the Governor as well as his staff did not know a thing about formations, they simply looked on in

amazed satisfaction. From the Formation of the Three Elements the soldiers deployed into a great many other formations, until the onlookers were getting rather tired, when the soldiers suddenly shouted "kill, kill," and ran to each side under their leaders, waving their weapons at each other and letting off their guns in the air. The Governor was visibly annoyed and perhaps was somewhat frightened at first. He waved to his military attaché, who at once pulled out one of the arrows and handed it to the adjutant. The arrow was taken outside, and waved three times in the air which brought the unearthly noise to an end. The soldiers were then sent back to their tents to make room for the cane shield corps. As to the gunnery, there was no separate review, as the guns were let off when the soldiers were participating in their sham fight.

The cane shield corps were really not a regular force, for they never had barracks to live in or headquarters to go to. Most of them were notorious rowdies of the town, who spent their time in fighting and quarrelling. With the exception of the leader, who received regular pay from the magistrate, the others were paid only during the months of spring and autumn, when the Prefect reviewed the local garrison. But nevertheless they knew their business better than the soldiers, as they practiced more and had real experts to train them. They came on in pairs, each man carrying a shield and matched with another man with either sword or spear. They manœuvred round and round the enclosure, cutting and parrying. Gradually the men with the shields worked round the men without shields, and encircled them. At this juncture about forty or fifty mounted soldiers came galloping in, and tried to attack the shielded men in order to save the surrounded men. The shielded men at once fell flat on the ground and began to roll and roll towards the horsemen. This was supposed to be a deadly attack upon the horses, and the latter retired. At the same time the men inside had got out, and so ended the attack.

The next item was more orderly but less interesting. A line of spearmen ranged themselves before the platform. After saluting the Governor as usual, they turned round and held their spears at the position of 'charge.' A trumpet was sounded three times, and each time the spearmen waved their spears in the air and advanced a step. A gong was then sounded three times, which was a signal for the soldiers to retire three steps. This was repeated time after time, with no variation whatever. People say this was the way the Chinese soldiers fought with the Mohammedans and won. The only thing which might seem to make such victories possible was the noise they made when advancing or retiring, which might have frightened the 'Huei-hueis' (Mohammedans).

The Commander had also on hand a number of travelling boxers, to show that the old art of boxing was not neglected. These did not interest the spectators very much, as they could be seen on any day in one of the temples. It was time for refreshments when the boxers got through. So the flag was taken back, and the Governor retired, amidst the booming of the cannon.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW THE HSIEH-T'AI 'LOST HIS FACE.'

The Grand Review was resumed in the afternoon. This was the most important part of the day's activities, when the officers and military cadets were examined. In the old days they were required to show their skill in handling the big sword, spear and other weapons, but gradually this was dropped, as no examiner could tell whether they were going through the proper movements or not—the examiners were usually scholars and naturally did not know anything about fencing. All they could see was whether or not the officers kept moving and turning and brandishing their weapons.

With the archery, however, it was quite different. Anyone could tell whether the men hit the target or not, even the examiners. That was one reason why they were always particular about archery. Another reason was that the founders of the Ch'ing Dynasty had won their dominions with their bowmen, and archery was, therefore, traditionally respected. One of the Emperors issued a special decree advising the Princes and people of the Imperial blood not to give up archery.

So it was with a feeling of great importance that the officers gathered in the afternoon. All the officers wore red fringed hats, with their buttons of rank, short riding-jackets, long gowns, split up the side, and boots. The cadets were similarly dressed, but without the riding-jackets. Each of them carried a bow under his left arm with five arrows held at the small of the back by the waist-belt, their feathered shafts projecting over the shoulder.

There were two classes of archery with which all officers were supposed to be acquainted; foot archery and archery on horse-back. The officers were examined only in foot-archery. A target was set about fifty or sixty paces away. It was of canvas, stretched on a frame, in the centre of which was painted a red bull's-eye. An officer and two soldiers were stationed about twenty paces on one side of the target to watch the results of the shots. The soldiers beat a drum when the target was hit, and when the bull's-eye was pierced they blew a trumpet too.

A roll book was spread before the Governor, in which he entered a red dot against the name of each officer, as it was called. Now on this particular occasion, the first officer called was the Hsieh-t'ai, or District Commander. This Hsieh-t'ai was the highest military officer of the district and second highest of the province, and it used to be the custom for the reviewers to excuse him from such examinations, to 'save his face.' He had once been selected at a review by the Emperor himself. The understanding was, that if a man was good enough for the Emperor's approval, he ought to be good enough for anybody else. The Hsieh-t'ai himself thought so, and accordingly neglected to practise any archery. He fully expected that the Governor would not call on him.

So he walked carelessly to the platform, bent his knee and came down to the spot from which he was to shoot. He stood there for a few moments, thinking that the Governor would excuse him, according to the custom. But nothing happened. He looked at his bow, and fumbled, for fully five minutes. Seeing that he was making himself ridiculous, he pulled out an arrow, put it on the string, and looked up at the Governor again. He was surprised and enraged to see the Governor looking on with an indifferent air, apparently waiting for him to shoot. Now that was a plain insult, because no Commander had ever been treated that way. Even the Governor's military staff were puzzled. They fully expected the Governor to save the situation by giving the word at the last moment. But the Governor was a scholar, and had great contempt for all soldiers. He wanted to show that civil officials stood decidedly above the military, and this was his opportunity. The Hsieh-t'ai saw all this and became more enraged. He lifted his bow angrily, and let fly an arrow without even taking aim. In rapid succession and in the same way he shot all of his five arrows, and returned to the Governor to report that he had finished. Needless to say, none of his arrows hit the target.

Of course the Governor would not stand this sort of impudence. With the sounding-block he banged the table, and said in an angry voice: "The three-yearly Grand Review is one of the greatest ordinances of the nation. You, being the commanding officer, ought to set an example. Now if your own skill is so poor, how can you expect your subordinates to do well? I know you are impudent and spiteful. You must know that I am here by the express decree of His Majesty, and your behaviour before me is tantamount to contempt for the Imperial Court. I must have you punished, to make an example of you." Thus saying he gave orders to have the Commander's red button removed on the spot, and told him to wait for instructions. Then and not until then the Commander realized the seriousness of his offence and knelt down on the stone pavement, asking for pardon, after having himself removed his hat, and placed it on the ground. The Governor, however, was too angry to listen to his plea. He ordered the other officers to carry on, leaving the Commander kneeling all the time.

Thoroughly to cow the officers, the Governor decided that the target was too near, and gave orders to have the distance measured off again, but the officer who measured the range managed not to find an error of more than a yard. The other officers then took their turns. Not one received the red circle mark against his name, although many of them never hit the target once. The officer watching the target was now on his guard, and took care to give credit whenever an arrow went near enough to the target to look as though it had gone through.

After the officers had passed the ordeal, the cadets were examined. In addition to the standing shots they were required to shoot from horse-back at a gallop. In order to be sure that the ponies would go straight, a wide ditch was dug, and used as a running track. The ditch was about 300 yards long, and along the side of it were planted three straw-men. The cadets were to shoot at the straw-men as they galloped past. This was almost a real test, as

the presence of the arrows in the straw-men indicated the actual skill of the shooter. Still there was one way out of it. The straw-men being planted on the edge of the narrow ditch, the cadets could reach them with their hands. So, instead of loosing their arrows from the string, the cadets could thrust them into the straw-men with their hands, if they could manage not to fall off. More than one did fall, to be carried off with a broken limb. Shooting at the leather bag and the bag of lime formed another test. They had to shoot at a bag of lime hung on a stand some 20 yards away, and to make the lime fly in the air. This was done from horse-back, at a gallop.

During all that time the District Commander was kneeling and waiting for the Governor's permission to rise. The Governor was adamant. Immediately the review was over, he left, in his chair, not even nodding to the kneeling officer. The Commander went and asked the Governor's military attaché to help him, but the attaché asked for 5,000 taels, which he was unable to produce. With much difficulty he raised 2,000 taels, but the attaché refused to entertain the proposition. The luckless Commander was eventually cashiered.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TRIALS OF AN ACTING MAGISTRATE.

Of officials of all ranks and grades the magistrates are perhaps the most varied in character and type. One who came under my notice and remains vividly in my memory was Wu Yun-fang. He was an able man in many ways, but quite corrupt. I was his immediate superior Prefect so I know the facts. It happened at Laichowfu in the early spring. At that time a certain Feng was the Magistrate of the Hsien, but on account of the death of his father he had to go home and mourn for three years, thus suddenly leaving the position vacant. As Laichow was comparatively a small city it was somewhat difficult to get a good man to fill the place. The only man available was Tao Ching-jui, the Proctor of the middle school. As he was 'expectant' magistrate with only a second-rate job, I thought he would like to act as Magistrate of Yih Hsien for a couple of months before the new Magistrate arrived. In this way I thought to compensate him for the 'lean' position he had been holding, as it was spring and time to collect the first term's land tax. He did not say much, but his gratitude was sincere.

I duly issued a notice appointing Tao Acting Magistrate of the city until the arrival of Wu Yun-fang, the newly appointed 'substantive' Magistrate. After due ceremony and some expense, Tao took the seal of the city official. All the 'rewards,' 'happy-money,' tips and Yamen-fees put together must have cost him something like 500 taels. (Yamen-fees are gifts of money given to the clerks, servants and runners of the Prefect's Yamen when one takes up a new appointment. The other fees are for the clerks and underlings of the Magistrate's Yamen.) As usual he spent the first day in worshipping at the different temples, and the second day in an inspection of the city. On the third day he proclaimed the court ready for business. He had more than ten cases the first day. The petitioners were told kindly to go home and wait for instructions, after securing guarantees.

That night Tao looked over the petitions carefully and found among them a case of disputed ownership in respect of certain properties claimed by two brothers. The case had been settled once by the former magistrate; but the losing party, the younger brother, thought he would try again before a new magistrate. Now to the greedy official an ownership suit between brothers is the case of cases, and is always welcomed as a favour from the God of Riches. Such a case usually lasts for years, until the disputed properties as well as the undisputed ones have all passed into the hands of the official. I cannot say whether it was the desire to profit himself that prompted him to take immediate action, but the next morning he issued a notice to the effect that he would hear the case two days later. At the

same time he proclaimed by special order that the tax-collectors should get ready to receive the land taxes, and gave instructions that the collection should be finished within a month.

Everything would have gone well with him, had not the approach of the 'substantive' Magistrate, Wu Yun-fang, been announced the next day. The gentleman clearly intended a check-mate. He was an experienced magistrate, and knew the ins and outs of the trade. He realized that if he waited till he arrived at the city before taking over control, he would stand to lose something like 20,000 or 30,000 taels. For the Acting Magistrate would certainly hurry through the collection, perhaps at a reduction of exchange rates in order to encourage the country folk. He probably counted on taking five or six days to reach the city, allowing for an official visit to the Governor, and during these five days the Acting Magistrate might seriously reduce his source of income by taking it himself. So instead of waiting till he arrived at the post he sent a special messenger ahead of him to proclaim his assumption of control.

Now this proclamation, though containing nothing more than the announcement that the new magistrate would take up his seal on such and such a date, nevertheless had an electrical effect. Wu's representative, who brought it, saw to that. He pointed out to all the Yamen subordinates that it was to their interest to save the situation for the incoming permanent official. Tao found himself suddenly deprived of the power to order or to give instructions. The Yamen runners became very insubordinate. It took an hour to summon a man who ordinarily could be called within a few minutes. A day ago his 'come' was echoed with prompt responsiveness, but now they answered tardily. Needless to say the land-tax payers did not turn up as expected. All the money collected from that source was 1,235 cash, or about 50 tael cents. This sum of money was paid in to shame Tao, as he had pressed the runners too hard. Even the two brothers who quarrelled over their properties miraculously became sensible and settled their dispute without appearing before the magistrate.

Tao became helpless, then angry and finally desperate. For if he did not get money right away he would have no chance, and as a result would lose the Tls. 500 capital he had invested. As a last effort he gave orders to call the court, that is to summon all the runners to the court room as if for a trial. As might be expected, it took all the morning to get enough men to make a show as an assembled Court. Even then it was found that practically all the chief runners were out on 'official business' and so were represented by their underlings. In spite of all these evasions, Tao came out and took the official chair. Having no one to scold at or to beat, as a relief to his temper, he began a general lecture. In his speech he told the men assembled that although he was a new man at the post he had treated them well; and in view of the kindness he had shown them and their duty towards the Imperial Court they ought to do all they could to collect the taxes in time for public use. The men listened to the magistrate with due respect, but said not a word, not even an "aye."

In the enthusiasm of his speech Magistrate Tao waxed hotter and hotter until he forgot himself and called the representative of

the tax-gatherers by name—and by a whole lot of other names. He banged the table and demanded to know what he meant by being so remiss. The man, thus provoked, answered back. He told Tao respectfully that it was not their fault that the money did not come in. They had done their best, but the country folk refused to pay, as they had heard a new magistrate was coming. That touched the magistrate on the raw. Like an angry tiger he let loose upon the man his long-suppressed anger, and told him that it was all rot. He told the man that he was the son of a turtle and a fool of a rotten egg, and many other things. He gave orders to have him beaten on the spot; but the men would not move. He told the man to kneel down on the ground; which he had, of course, to obey. He then pointed out two particular men to give the man on the ground 300 strokes. Thus singled out, two men came out of their ranks slowly, and undid the kneeling man's clothing. When that was done they stretched him flat on the ground and began beating. But instead of beating the man's back they only let the bamboo slightly touch his skin, and come down with a whack on the ground. The process was so skillfully done that at the end of the 300 strokes the only sign left on the man's back was a red spot. This enraged the magistrate more, and he ordered him 500 more strokes. This time, however, the men did not respond to his orders. They shouted their obedience, as usual, but remained where they stood. This was too much for Tao. He came down from the platform, snatched a bamboo from the hands of the executioner, and began to beat the man himself. However his strokes were not very severe, as he had never in his life wielded anything more lethal than a pen; but he thoroughly embittered the runners, and from then on could exact neither obedience nor respect.

Word soon came that the new magistrate, Wu Yun-fang, was on his way to his post and that he would arrive in the city in two days. The Yamen runners, taking this as a pretext, all left the place and spent their time in tea shops. Some of the more daring ones even carried on a sort of round-about attack on the sanctuary of Magistrate Tao. They sent in a whole lot of coolies into the yard and made such a noise, pretending to get ready for the new official, that Tao was literally worried out of his quarters. He moved out two days before the arrival of Magistrate Wu Yun-fang.

CHAPTER XXV.

A Magistrate Who was too Clever.

The reason why the emissary of Magistrate Wu worked so energetically and so successfully was that he and Wu were partners, on a profit sharing basis. For when Wu was waiting and intriguing for a 'substantive' position, he had spent all his money and run into debt. Then a chance to buy an appointment presented itself, but he had no money at his disposal. He met at this time two men, named Chiang Fu and Li Shun. These two men were old Yamen hands, and so had a little money. It was arranged that each of them should lend 3,000 taels to Wu in return for which they were to receive appointments, Chiang as drafter of documents, and Li as accountant. The one who worked so successfully in defeating Tao and ejecting him from the Yamen was the accountant Li.

Now a magistrate must have someone whom he can trust working among the clerks, otherwise it is exceedingly difficult to find out what is going on outside of his own room. This is why some magistrates appoint no one except their relatives as chief clerks of the different departments. On the other hand it is dangerous to have one, still more two, 'big-stomached' clerks. They, without exception, care more for money than even your position, and the greater number of magistrates dismissed or degraded are victims of their 'big-stomached' clerks. Wu, being a clever man, thought he could manage these two, and gave them a free hand. Perhaps he thought it quite simple to let them begin by having things all their own way. In their eagerness to make money they would certainly resort to illegal methods, and then the people would complain. Then he could proclaim their guilt and deport them, so earning a reputation for integrity and saving 6,000 taels. He did not realize, however, that Chiang and Li were more than his match.

At first things went on fairly well. Chiang and Li were somewhat slow to obey orders, but they turned in the money collected from land taxes, and only pocketed the extra duties which they made the magistrate impose. But gradually they began to interfere with lawsuits and public works. Their insubordinate ways were much criticized, but Wu kept cool. Once Wu's nephew, who was the assistant accountant, advised his uncle to pay the men off for fear of getting into trouble himself. But Wu maintained that he knew what he was doing.

Then the ownership case between the two brothers came up again. After an earlier lawsuit they had divided the property according to local custom, the elder son receiving two thirds while the younger son received one third. There was one piece of property which was not divided but kept as a jointly owned family possession. This was the old residence, together with some 20 mou of land. The residence was a big one, of which the two families each occupied a wing, leaving the central hall for common use as guest-room and

school room. The women of the two families constantly quarrelled on account of their children, and family fights were part of the daily routine. The situation became so unpleasant that the two brothers agreed to live separately. Then they disagreed over the ownership of the house. The elder claimed an optional right to buy out his brother's share, or exchange it for a piece of land. The younger claimed that he could not be evicted from his wing of the house, or deprived of his right to share the use of the central hall. Having failed to settle the dispute by the impartial arbitration of the elders of the clan, the younger brother brought an action against the elder.

The younger brother worked through the magistrate's nephew and so got into direct touch with Wu. He gave him two hundred taels and promised more if the case was decided in his favour. As money could reach the Gods, a summons was issued the next day against the elder brother. The latter brought a counter suit against his younger brother for conspiring to sell the property of his ancestors. He paid three hundred taels and promised 500 more if the magistrate would decide in his favour. Both these offers the assistant accountant, that is the nephew of the magistrate, received impartially. Beyond an official notice that the magistrate would hear the case as soon as the witnesses were all summoned, nothing was done for the next five days. Both sides became anxious and more money poured into the magistrate's pocket. The younger brother sought out an influential member of the gentry who visited the magistrate on his behalf and offered to give 200 taels to 'repair the Yamen' as a mark of appreciation of the official's justice. This the magistrate objected to, saying that it would look like a bribe; but he reconsidered his opinion when the money was offered as a contribution towards educational expenses. This was done on the same day.

The next day all the witnesses were summoned to the Yamen and a hearing was held in the inner court. (This was to prevent outsiders from hearing the case). Nothing, however, came of it. The magistrate refused to hear any proposal for separation, on the ground that brothers ought to live peacefully together and keep the properties of their ancestors intact. He advised them to settle the dispute amicably so as not to bother their 'paternal official' with the affair any more. To this, of course, the brothers refused to agree. They pleaded for a definite settlement. Their confidence in the effect of money was so great that they both offered to abide by any final decision of the magistrate. Magistrate Wu, however, was in no hurry to settle the affair. So he dismissed them with a promise to hear them again.

Each brother was surprised that the magistrate did not decide in his favour. In turn they called on the assistant accountant to enquire why the promised decision had not been pronounced, and were told that they must let their minds be at ease, as everything would turn out all right. The elder brother suspected that something was wrong and set about trying to find out the cause of the delay. He was told that he should have gone to Chiang, the drafter of documents, the man whose every word was listened to by the magistrate. Accordingly he called on Chiang and entrusted the case to him, promising a sum of 500 taels in addition to the 300 which he paid in ready money, if he succeeded in ejecting the younger brother, the

black-hearted wolf; at the same time saying that now it had gone so far that money was a secondary consideration.

Chiang was so confident that he could manage the affair that he accepted the offer and guaranteed to secure a favourable decision within three days. He was so confident, because magistrate Wu had not yet refused his requests once. But to his surprise the magistrate flatly refused to listen to him in this case, and hinted that he had better leave it alone. Chiang did not quarrel with his superior openly, but grumbled that he thought it was understood they were to share all profits, and that it was not fair to cut off his source of income in that way. Wu pretended that he did not hear and made no comment. But as soon as Chiang left the room he wrote a notice, which he immediately posted outside of the second hall, to the following effect: "I, the Magistrate, am pure and clear like water, and hate the unscrupulous like vipers. I have heard that some of my men have been trying to blackmail the innocent people of the country, which action is a serious violation of the law. Since I am the paternal official of the city I would not allow such a state of affairs to continue under my eyes. Therefore restrain yourselves and keep your hands clean, otherwise the law of the Emperor knows no distinction and you will be sorry when it is too late." The ordinary Yamen runners did not pay much attention to this notice, as they believed that it was only another piece of 'official composition' (a notice not to be taken seriously). Chiang, however, took it to heart very much, as he knew it was directed against him. He meditated long on a method of revenge, and finally decided upon a plan.

The next day the magistrate sat and heard lawsuits as usual. But just when he was about to leave his chair after he had finished his day's work, Chiang came forward from behind him and told the employés of the court to wait a while. He then told them that they ought to take notice of the official order given out yesterday and refrain from accepting any bribes. He told them that it was the wish of the magistrate to pay them their wages regularly, and that he expected them not to receive any extra fees; especially, he said, during this time when the land taxes were being collected. As the magistrate did not wish to gain a cent for himself, they must not accept a single cash more than the law demanded. Although Magistrate Wu was somewhat taken aback by the strange action of Chiang he did not see any reason for such a long lecture. He began to realize the seriousness of Chiang's speech two or three days later, when the number of people who came to pay the land taxes became smaller and smaller until on the fourth day not a single one turned up. Wu was all indignation when he saw the piles of money on his table every night regularly shrinking until he was told that the country folk had ceased to come in. Upon inquiry he found that the people, having heard that the magistrate was going to cancel the extra fees and collect the tax according to real value, had decided to wait till he should issue an official notice. For by so doing they would save four-fifths of the money they were usually required to pay.

Of course Magistrate Wu was fearfully angry when he learned the truth. He was with difficulty persuaded by his friends not to dismiss Chiang. Word was, however, given out that he had to leave the city within three days or be arrested and punished for bribery.

Chiang took the challenge in a matter-of-fact way, and said that he had long expected this day would come; but he told the magistrate's nephew that he must have his 3,000 taels back before he would leave the city. He added that he did not wish to haggle with His Honour the Magistrate over interest, and that he would leave it to the Great Lao-yeh to decide how much he was entitled to from the proceeds of office. Here he mentioned seventeen or eighteen cases in which he had handed the magistrate a total sum of no less than 20,000 taels.

The message was carried to the magistrate, who showed decided signs of uneasiness. But he pulled himself together and told his nephew to inform Chiang that the money would be forthcoming when it could be ascertained that his record was free from corruption. This threat failed to frighten Chiang. He told the clerks that an investigation was entirely unnecessary, as he had with him the promissory note which Magistrate Wu had signed when the money was lent to him. Then he came to see my Chief Secretary, who was an acquaintance of his, and told him of his intention to bring a suit against the magistrate. He was told, however, to wait for a few days before any steps were taken. My Chief Secretary at once reported the case to me in detail, as he said he was afraid that it would be an official scandal if it became known to the public.

I immediately sent for the magistrate and asked him if it were true that he had borrowed 3,000 taels from his clerk Chiang. He turned red in the face and stammered out something to the effect that it was the clerk who had asked him to deposit the 3,000 taels in the bank with which he (Wu) kept an account. Then he plucked up courage and accused his document drafter of corruption, and said that he was just about to institute an investigation into the matter when Chiang took the desperate step of falsely accusing him. As I did not wish to decide anything before I had secured more facts about the whole affair, I told him to pay Chiang the 3,000 taels, and to save his face I told him that he might hand the money to me if he preferred. This he did a few hours later, and so settled the matter as far as the loan was concerned.

I then sent two of my most trustworthy secretaries to investigate into the real facts of the affair and found the case to be as I have just described in this narrative. To save the face of the official circle I had to let Chiang and other runners go, but Magistrate Wu was dismissed by the Governor upon my suggestion a few days later.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A YOUNG REFORMER.

The corruptions of the old-style officials were legion—they have become a by-word among servants of His Majesty. So far I have given a few samples of the old type. The new style are in a different class entirely. A personal friend of mine who was the secretary of the Governor of Shantung narrated the following story to me.

It was seven or eight years ago, when the Superior Dynasty was having a great deal of trouble with the Germans in Kiaochao, on account of local disturbances, that Sung Meng-chi emerged from obscurity into 'red fame.' At that time the conditions along the boundary line of the leased territory were such that the Governor had to visit the disturbed places in person, to awe the troublesome country-people into submission. According to diplomatic courtesy he had to call on the foreign Governor. He was deeply impressed by the success the Germans had achieved, and during conversation he told his secretaries of his respect for foreign guns and machines, and gave the impression of his desire to introduce some 'reform.'

One of the secretaries, the uncle of Sung Meng-chi, mentioned this while talking with his nephew the next day. Meng-chi at once conceived the idea of becoming a reformer. At that time perhaps he could be considered one of the able minor-diplomatic officials, as he had been to a foreign school (a mission school) for one year and picked up a whole lot of things ordinary officials did not know. He did not read English, as the foreign school taught no English, for fear that the Chinese would learn their secrets! However, Meng-chi was a clever chap. He taught himself by reading all the new literature he could get hold of. He had a little library containing mostly books like "New Methods of the Great West," "The Origin of Railways," "Foreign Customs," "Useful Helps for Examinations," and "Recent Documents on Reform."

So he went home that night, and locking himself in his library, picked out every likely book that would give him imformation and started to read them all through. With the vast amount of material so gathered he drew up a lengthy petition. He recounted how the foreign countries had become strong by having quick-firing guns and big warships. But, he said, all these came through having lots of money, and money could only be made quickly by using machines. He suggested that the Government should take the lead in opening up oil mills, and establish a General Industrial Institution to teach foreign methods of candle-making, hat-making, soap-making and a score of other industries.

Although the petition was a long one, it did not take Sung Meng-chi long to write, much of the labour of planning and thinking being saved by copying part of the contents of various books *en bloc.* The only difficulty he encountered was that in some of the books foreigners were named whom he did not know at all. At first he

intended to leave them out, but without them he could not show the vastness of his knowledge. Finally he put them in, knowing, I suppose, that the Governor would not be any the wiser. At that time any one would believe you if you told him that it was Washington who conquered all Europe. Well, Sung copied all that he thought was necessary to make a complete Detailed Suggestion, finishing it by adding a suitable preamble and peroration.

Sung had no difficulty in presenting his suggestions, as the Governor had become quite an enthusiast for reform. He was immediately ushered into the presence of the Governor, who praised him for his wonderful knowledge of foreign affairs and asked him a great many questions about the machinery he suggested, and how much such undertakings would cost. Without any hesitation Sung answered all the questions, as he could say any thing he liked without fear of challenge. As to the expenses, he thought they might amount to say 300,000 taels for installations. No provision for running expenses was needed as the mills would make millions as soon as they could turn out goods. The Governor praised him again, and told him that he would consult with him again the next day. That night Sung read more reform books, in anticipation of the next day's interview.

True to his word the Governor sent for him again the next day, and gave him to understand that he really intended to start the mills. He, wanted however, to know if Sung knew where to buy such machines. Sung, who did not know that it would take nearly six months or even a year to get the machines from foreign countries, said he could get them in Shanghai. As to the price, he had to bargain with the foreign merchants there as there were so many of them; besides, he said, the prices of machinery fluctuated from day to day, and he had to take great care not to be cheated by the crafty foreigners. To change the subject Sung asked the Governor what kind of power he preferred to use, whether electricity or steam, and how big a machine he wished to begin with, say 1,000 horse-power or 2,000 horse-power; for Sung had prepared the previous night to talk about this matter. The Governor was puzzled, and said if he wanted horses he had better use Chinese ponies so as to save the profits for China; as to the choice of power he thought 'tien' (electricity) was not a thing for their purpose, as they had to send foreigners to catch it. He preferred steam as that could be got in China. Of course Sung was too wise to criticize the Governor's views and simply remarked on His Excellency's penetrating judgement.

So the plan to start the mills was settled, and in a few days' time an official certificate was sent to Sung Meng-chi, appointing him special deputy to purchase the machines for the different mills at a salary of 300 taels per month with expenses. He was given 200,000 taels to take with him, with the promise that more would be sent if required.

After spending a few days in making necessary preparations and taking leave of his friends, Sung travelled to Tsingtao and took a steamer for Shanghai. While on board the steamer he made the acquaintance of the ship's compradore, who finding that Sung was on a money-spending mission did all he could to gain his goodwill. Sung was naturally grateful, as he was wondering what he would do with-

out a single friend in the strange city. For he had never been outside of Shantung and did not know how the barbarians' market (foreign settlement) looked.

Upon their arrival at Shanghai the compradore of the ship, Yang Erh-hsiu, took Sung to a first-class hotel and in the same evening introduced him to a number of compradores and leading members of the gentry at a feast given in one of the singing-girl houses. For the next five or six days it was all he could do to attend feasts. One thing was very new to him,-that was almost without a single exception the feasts were given in the singing-girls' houses. Once or twice he was invited to the foreign-style restaurants, but then the girls also went. He was also surprised to see the wealth the girls seemed to possess, for every one of them wore five or six pairs of jewelled bracelets, while their hair was adorned with pearls and diamonds. Gradually he learned to call girls, order 'flower-wine' (feasts with singing girls), play 'sparrow,' and a number of other things. He became so attached to a particular girl named Hsiao Feng that he practically made her house his home. He almost forgot his official mission in the excitement of the Shanghai life.

Two weeks passed without anything being accomplished for the Government, while the money he brought with him was going fast in paying singing-house bills, theatre bills, carriage bills, silversmiths' bills, jewellers' bills, silk-shop bills and tailors' bills. One day he received a telegram from the Shantung Governor asking what progress he had made. This reminded him of his special mission and made him broach the subject that night to the compradore of a certain foreign firm. The latter, who was remarkably well prepared, whipped out a roll of paper from his pocket and told Sung quietly that he had everything ready for him. The papers shown to Sung were drawings of the machinery which he would require. As he could not understand a thing about these drawings he told Tiao, the compradore, that he did not care to see them. He was then shown the draft of the agreement in Chinese, which he read with great interest. After reading it he told Tiao the price was too high. Thereupon Tiao whispered in his ears something which made him to decide that after all the price was not high; for the 500,000 taels quoted included 5 % for Sung as a return-commision. But still, as he had told the Governor that it would not cost more than three or four hundred thousand taels he wanted to make the figure come nearer that mark. Finally it was arranged that they would buy a set of second-hand machines at a price of 300,000 taels. It was understood that the machines were to pass as new, and the bill was to be made out for 400,000 taels. This extra one hundred thousand would be divided between them as squeeze. That night a telegram was sent to the Governor of Shantung informing him of the progress of the negotiation and asking his approval to sign the agreement. The approval came the next day and the Agreement was signed at once. Out of the money Sung brought with him Tls. 200,000 was paid as bargain money.

Having thus settled the business and in view of the large sum of money that was to come to him as commission, Sung began to spend money like water. He married Hsiao Feng, the girl he was so attached to, and bought two others besides. He rented a house in Shanghai and kept the place up in great style. Two months later he had

to borrow money from the compradore of the foreign firm with the agreement as the security. As he realized how dangerous it was for him to go on the way he did, he tried to cut down some unnecessary expenses; in this he was frustrated by his new little wife. She told him plainly that she understood that they were to live like officials and not like poor beggars, and that she would not live in any other way. So there was nothing else for Sung to do but maintain the pace to the last. He thought he could swell the figure of the expenses as a last resort.

But alas! Just when the first shipment arrived a telegram came instructing him to cancel the agreement, as the old Governor had left his post and the new Governor was extremely conservative. Sung at once called on Tiao and informed him of the official message he had received. Tiao laughed, and told Sung to set his mind at ease. He said a foreign merchant was much more powerful than the Governor, and there was no need to fear his breaking the agreement. They went to see the foreign manager and told him what the new Governor proposed to do, and asked him to complain through his Ministei at Peking. So in due time the Tsungli Yamen was told that unless the goods were taken delivery of at once, damages to the extent of 500 taels for every day's delay would be demanded, as was stipulated in the agreement. Nearly frightened out of their wits, the Tsungli Yamen ordered the Shantung Governor to pay the money or lose his position. So the bill was paid, the second-hand machines were delivered, and Sung and Tiao received their due share of commission.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SWORN BROTHERS.

An official's life is full of uncertainties. His post is never secure. Besides the possibility of being squeezed out of his position by some one who pays a better price, there is always the danger of unintentionally offending his superior. There are little things, not rules or regulations but customs, that one has to observe as strictly as laws, otherwise really unpleasant things may happen that destroy the official prospects of the offender. One thing which would hardly seem of importance to the layman, but is very strictly observed, especially among the Manchus, is the convention of avoiding the use of any character appearing in the name of one's superior, his father, his grandfather or even his great-grandfather. A new official must find out all about these names before he presents himself before his superior. He must change his own name if there occurs in it a character which conflicts with this tradition. Even in conversation he has to take care not to mention those particular letters or characters. This custom is called 'Pi-hui' or 'Chi hui'—respectful avoidance.

Many men have suffered in consequence of their negligence in observing this usage. But the most pathetic case I know was that of Liu Ching-chieh and his son Yi-peh. Liu was once the Provincial Treasurer of Yunnan. While in office there he made the acquaintance of the Provincial Supreme Judge Jui, a Manchu. The acquaintance gradually ripened into something like affection, and they became sworn-brothers. Sworn-brothers are usually called exchange-record-brothers, because it is the custom to exchange family records for three generations back when two men bind themselves by this pledge.

After a year or so Judge Jui, the Manchu, was promoted to be Treasurer of Kueichow. From that position he was further promoted until three or four years later he became the Viceroy of Hunan. Liu being a Han (Chinese) did not receive his promotion until he had served eleven years as a Treasurer. In the twelfth year he was appointed Provincial Treasurer of Hunan, not a promotion in rank but a better paid position than the former one. Liu was very happy because he was to serve under his sworn-brother Jui. So it was with a light heart that he went to his new post in Hunan.

Before he could take up his new duties he had to go to Peking to attend an Imperial audience. On his way up he called on his future superior and sworn-brother Jui. According to custom he had to return the family records of the Governor, as he had now become his immediate junior. But in spite of the rule Jui would have none of it, on account of their friendship. He continued to address Liu as "big brother," and called himself "little brother." He asked Liu to dinners and showed him every courtesy. Liu, being a simple-minded man, took all these as genuine manifestations of friendliness and so never mentioned the family records again.

In due course Liu returned from Peking and on his way to Changsha called on the Viceroy again. He was treated just as cordially as before and the Viceroy showed no sign of any dissatisfaction with him. So after a few days' stay he proceeded to his post. Unfortunately he fell sick after three months, and being old, became dangerously ill. His wife and daughters were so alarmed that they telegraphed to his son Yi-Peh, who was then in Peking waiting for an audience with the Emperor. Of course Yi-Peh hastened back to his father as soon as he received the message. Finding that his father would take some time to recover, he urged him to resign from his post. Liu, thinking that it would not be difficult for his son to get an appointment under his sworn-brother, resigned, without any fear of the consequences to his family. After having made arrangements for the family Yi-peh went to Peking and in due course was allotted to Hunan. The Viceroy received him very kindly, inquired after his father's health, and asked him how he had fared in Peking. In short, he showed that he had not forgotten his friendship with the young man's father, and was eager to see him succeed. At first Yi-peh was much encouraged by the kind treatment of the Viceroy, but his hope gradually decreased as three months passed and he received no sign from his father's sworn-brother. He began to be anxious and begged the Treasurer to speak to the Viceroy on his behalf. Jui, the Viceroy, told the Treasurer that it was not due to his unwillingness that Liu was still without a position; the reason was that if he had given Liu a position too soon others might become jealous and accuse him of partiality. He assured the Treasurer that as soon as Liu had acquired some experience he should receive a good position.

So six months passed with Liu still in the experience-gathering condition. After waiting for so long, Yi-peh's father became impatient and decided to interview the Viceroy himself. He thought perhaps a personal request would move him to do something for his son. As ill-luck would have it, his house was burnt down the night before he was ready to leave Changsha. It was only through the generosity of fellow-officials that he was able to get enough money to travel in a way suitable to his standing.

As the fire had left him a poor man, Liu was all the more anxious that his son should get an appointment at the earliest opportunity. Therefore he called on the Viceroy the day after his arrival at the provincial capital. Jui was glad to see his old friend, so he said, and showed deep sympathy for Liu's misfortune. But beyond this he said and did nothing. Getting impatient with Jui's pretences the old man asked him point blank about his son's position. Thereupon the Viceroy told Liu in a confidential tone something like this, "You know my difficulties, my big brother. If it were someone else I could give him any kind of position and be done with it. But as it is your honourable son I have to give him a suitable one. On the other hand it is at present very embarrassing to give a good position to a man who has no experience whatever. However, you may rely upon me , my big brother, to do everything I can for him as soon as opportunity arises." He talked in this strain for fully half an hour, but turning it or twisting it always came to the conclusion that there was no position at that moment.

Liu began to be suspicious, and made inquiries. To his surprise he found that once the Viceroy had mentioned to the Treasurer that he considered the action of Liu in keeping the family records to be deliberately insulting. Liu also found that the character for 'Yi' in his son's name occurred in the name of the Viceroy's grand-father, and the Viceroy complained about the awkwardness whenever he had an interview with Yi-peh. For the letter 'Yi' always jarred on his ears, and he did not like to hear anyone pronounce his grand-father's name, still less to call any of his subordinates by that name. Although Liu felt much hurt, he had to swallow his pride and endeavour to propitiate the Viceroy. Then it suddenly came to Liu's mind that the original records had been burnt at Changsha. This difficulty appeared unsurmountable, but they were relieved to find, after consulting Jui's chief secretary, who was a fellow countryman of Liu's, that the Viceroy did not know very many characters, and so the records could be forged. This they did. Liu and his son went to the Viceroy's Yamen in person to return the records and to announce that Yi-peh's name was changed to Shou-peh, thus avoiding the character 'Yi.' The Viceroy received the records, but asked to be excused, as he was busy.

The Provincial Treasurer was again requested to approach the Viceroy on Liu's behalf. This time Jui promised an appointment within a few days. The position offered was, however, one that needed money to begin with. It was the Directorship of the Mint. The understanding was that Liu had to make good some 20,000 taels, which the previous director had extravagantly spent. This was nothing but an indirect squeeze; but Liu quietly accepted it. It was the best the Viceroy would offer, and he had either to accept or leave Hunan altogether. Such is official friendship and such is official custom. With some difficulty Liu Yi-peh, now Liu Shou-peh, raised the required amount and entered upon his official career; but he vowed that he would be no sworn-brother to any Manchu.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Glorious Victory.

Justice is a thing which cannot be secured in China, and is to be found least of all in official dealings. It is always the survival of the strongest. Unless a crime is a personal offence against someone in power no charge can be proven against a man who has money or influence. In such cases, however, some appearance of justice is always provided in the way of a 'devil substitute' (scapegoat); that is to say, in order that the influential may escape, a minor official is made to suffer punishment. If peculation, extortion or neglect of duty is alleged against an official, an 'investigation' is invariably ordered. Sometimes, just to give some appearance of reality to the affair, the order or decree is said to be secret. But such secrets usually become public property even before they are actually issued, so that the implicated party can make preparations before the 'secret' investigator arrives on the scene. The post of investigator is naturally much sought for. In some cases a person is appointed investigator solely to give him a little 'chun-tieh'—financial help. Of course it looks dangerous or risky for any official deliberately to cheat the Imperial Court when acting as an investigator. This is neutralised by the use of ambiguous terms in the report. The commonest conclusion of such a report is that "There is ground for suspicion but no proof have I been able to find." During recent years this has become almost the invariable result of an investigation. Of such cases I could recount scores. But the most striking in my experience is the case of the 't'u-fei' suppression in Yenchowfu.

It happened that a small band of salt-smugglers—about one hundred strong—opened up a gambling house in one of the villages near Yenchowfu, with the connivance of local officials. Naturally there was a great deal of fighting and quarrelling round about the gambling house. One day a murder case was reported to the magistrate. The scene of the murder was some 10 *li* (about 3 miles) from the gambling house, and in order to reach the place the magistrate had to travel by boat, passing the site of the gambling house itself. Word was therefore sent to the gamblers to keep quiet when the magistrate was passing by. The messenger, however, blundered, and instead of telling them to keep quiet he told them to clear out, which of course made them angry. Knowing that the magistrate would only take eight or ten untrained 'ching ping'—body-guards—they prepared to fight.

The unsuspecting magistrate's official boat floated peacefully down the canal through the rice fields until it came to Yenchiawan where the gamblers were waiting for it. The magistrate was enjoying his water-pipe when he suddenly heard a big noise like a drunken brawl on the bank. He opened his little window to find out the cause of such a noise, and was instantly received with a volley of curses and

vilification evidently meant for himself. Prudently he withdrew his head, and in an arrogant voice ordered the rascals to be arrested. His body-guard shouted valiantly, but nothing was done; for the soldiers, seeing that the gamblers had rifles and ammunition, were wise enough to lie low and avoid even appearing on deck. All the weapons they had were rusty muzzle-loaders without bullets. All the time the gamblers were shouting threats from the bank. They demanded to know the reason of his coming to clear them out, after receiving from them three hundred thousand cash.

The magistrate was of course exceedingly frightened and dared not show so much as his head outside. Thinking that he might bluff them, he shouted at the top of his voice "Clear off, or I will apply for troops to wipe you out of existence." This threat was greeted with a volley of real rifle shots. Nobody was hurt, as the bullets went over the boat. Then some one shouted out "Don't kill him, give him a bath. Shoot at the bottom of the boat." Another volley, better aimed, and the boat began to sink. The soldiers, when they saw that the boat was no longer a safe place, got out, plunged into the canal on the other side, and swam for the bank. The magistrate tried to follow their lead, with the aid of a plank held by his personal attendant. He was, however, not to be let off so easily. As soon as the gamblers saw the plank they opened fire. Fortunately they were poor shots, otherwise the official would have met an untimely end. Bullets, however, came whistling by, and some of them hit the plank. The servant who was holding the plank let go with a howl and made off, leaving the official exposed to the gamblers. The leader of the gang ordered his ruffians to cease fire. "We will now examine him," he said. The men caught the spirit of their chief and shouted to the magistrate to kowtow to his excellency the smuggler chief. This the magistrate, who had floundered to the bank, was already doing. He called them all 'ta-ko' (big brothers) and implored them to be reasonable. He told them that he was on his way to the scene of a murder case and entertained no malice towards them. He grovelled again and begged them to spare his life. They had no intention of killing him, and after some more horse-play decamped, fearing the arrival of more troops.

Some of the soldiers and Yamen runners then came out of their hiding places behind the grave mounds and among the high reeds along the canal bank. They moved the official, who had collapsed upon finding his leg had been hit, into another boat, and began their melancholy journey home.

As they approached the city the magistrate grew stronger in spirit and courage, and by the time he was carried into his Yamen, he was quite himself again. He upbraided his men heartily for their poltroonery. He told them that they were a lot of 'turtle-eggs' and 'mud-heads,' not daring to fight a handful of local rascals. He decided that the people of that village were all 't'u-fei' (lewd fellows of the baser sort) and determined to send for 'ta-ping' (regular soldiers) and clear out all this scum.

To make sure of getting soldiers to do the butchering, the magistrate magnified the whole affair in his report to the Prefect and Viceroy. The number of smugglers was increased to a thousand, and open defiance of authority was alleged as the cause of the trouble. He

urged that soldiers be sent at once, as the city was threatened day and night. Quite a pretty little rebellion was invented. The original despatch was followed up by some vivid telegrams.

The soldiers did come, but not for three weeks, as the Commander took a week to make the necessary preparations. New uniforms had to be made, for some of the soldiers had nothing but rags. Tents had to be bought and the Commander's military staff had to be chosen. Then it took them nearly two weeks to reach the place, as they only marched 10 *li* a day and took one day's rest after every two days. Order was given to camp when the guides reported that they were 5 *li* from the scene of the Yenchiawan incident. The Commander was an expectant Taotai, and though not much of a scholar he had read in novels that the great generals of antiquity always "nourished (rested) the soldiers for three days" before and after a great battle. So he too ordered three days' rest. Meanwhile one or two of the older army hands had sent out scouts to spy upon the rebels.

The scouts returned and reported that everything was quiet and no trace of the rebels could be found. They suggested that the small stinking robbers had fled upon hearing of the approach of the tiger troops of His Excellency the Commander. The truth was that the gamblers had left the place on the day they gave the magistrate such a fright, themselves becoming frightened as they grew sober. The Commander was pleased to be angry, and gave the scouts a severe reprimand. He told them that the Viceroy certainly would not have sent him with 3,000 soldiers if there were no rebels, and they must search carefully as the cunning local 't'u-fei' might be the villagers themselves. It must be said here that the Commander would have been the first man to run if he had stumbled on real rebels. The reason of his being so bold was that he had known all along the real situation. Besides, a fight of any sort was the best opportunity to secure promotion, and so he was reluctant to leave the place without burning powder.

The scouts fell in with the spirit of the occasion. They came back the same afternoon, after spending the morning in a tea shop in the village, with the report that the rebels were gathering about 7 *li* away in a certain temple. Now it was true that that morning there were hundreds of people in the temple, as it was a general market day, and the people had got up a theatrical show for the God of Riches, and as was the custom the people from other villages flocked to the place either to see the show or to sell their goods. The scouts, forced to put up some rebels, reported this to be a gathering of 't'u-fei.'

Whether it was due to caution or not, the Commander did not move during the day. The reason he gave out was that in the book of strategy it was written that "movements of troops should be like those of the spirits and gods," and to his mind spirits and gods mostly moved during the night. He gave orders to move early next morning, in faithful imitation of the story-teller's version of warfare. That is, he ordered the soldiers to get up at the third hour the next morning, to breakfast at the fourth and begin the attack at the fifth.

At about five o'clock the next morning he summoned all his military officers and civil councillors to give them orders for the attack. Here again he carried out the romantic style of procedure by sending out 300 men as advance guard, 300 to each wing and retaining 500 for the centre or main body. He himself brought up the rear

with a body-guard of 1800 men. They slowly approached the temple in which the market people were beginning to gather for the last day of the festival. By the time they reached the place it was about ten o'clock. Word was then sent to the Commander that "the rebel den" was reached. A few minutes later a messenger came back with an 'order flag' to order them to open the battle. Upon receiving the order the soldiers fired volley after volley into the air and added to the noise of the fusillade with shouts of "fight, fight, kill, kill!"

Though none of the bullets hit any of the country folk they were nevertheless frightened out of their wits. Crying "the robbers have come," they threw their things away and ran for dear life. The soldiers shouted even louder than before, and to make things look realistic they set fire to some of the houses and began to loot and destroy. The soldiers in the rear upon hearing the noise rushed forward and joined in the pillage, and in the confusion that ensued they shot some of the villagers as well as some of their own men. When they had driven every male occupant out of the houses and insulted the women as they liked they sent word to the Commander that the village was cleared of rebels, and waited for his orders. Without going to the village to see what had happened, the Commander gave orders to return to camp. So with drums beating and horns blowing the soldiers returned to their camp laden with spoils of war in money, silver, silk, clothing, utensils, chickens and pigs. A few flags and spears they took from the theatre-house were presented to the Commander as proof of their victory over the rebels, while the soldiers they themselves had shot were carried along as wounded and killed in action.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Soldiers Come to Town.

Having annihilated the imaginary rebels the Commander made a triumphal entry into the city in a sedan chair—he was afraid of horses. Of course the Prefect and the Magistrate were there to welcome him. They prepared temporary headquarters for him in the Literary Examination Hall and found suitable sleeping places for the soldiers. The Commander and his men were feasted for three days. The near-by villages were cleared of pigs and chickens, which were commandeered by the Yamen runners as a right and proper contribution towards the entertainment of the soldiers who had spared them from the edge of the sword. The Magistrate did give some money for the purchase of the provisions, but the runners thought they ought to have it for their trouble in going out so far to fetch the cumbersome loads—which they did not carry.

While the officials were feasting the Commander and his staff, an urgent message came for the Magistrate, saying that certain serious cases needed his immediate attention. He therefore left the feast and returned to his Yamen. There he saw a sight he never wanted to see again. The main way to his private residence was blockaded by wounded men and women, most of them moaning and bitterly cursing the soldiers. Stretched on the platform of his judgement seat were three men smeared all over with blood, apparently dead. At the sight of the Magistrate the men tried to get up and make obeisance, but the women cried out all the louder and cursed all the more. Moreover, they all refused to let the Magistrate retire to his private chamber before he had himself looked at their wounds.

The Magistrate then ascended the hall and took his official chair. He summoned the older ones before him and told them how sorry he was. He said that they were all his children and that he would see justice done to them. Having thus soothed their bitter feelings he told them to go down and present proper petitions stating the case of each one and the amount of damage done to them and to their properties so that due compensation might be given to them. The country people upon hearing that they were going to get some money kowtowed and thanked the Magistrate for his benevolence.

Immediately after the crowd left the Yamen the Magistrate reported the matter to the Prefect who told him to see the Commander. The latter was still in bed when the Magistrate reached his place. After waiting about an hour he was ushered into the Commander's presence and reported the situation. The Commander did not say a word. Evidently he was wondering how he might avoid his share of the unpleasant responsibility. Guessing what was in the mind of the Commander the Magistrate got up and whispered in his ear something that must have been comforting and reassuring, for the drawn countenance of the Commander at once relaxed into a smile.

He told the Magistrate to go ahead with his plan and promised him a special recommendation for promotion for his invaluable service.

Early next morning a notice was posted outside of the Magistrate's Yamen to the following effect: "The Commander, H. E. the Taotai, is fearfully strict in discipline, and would allow none of his troops to commit any form of outrage. The purpose of the expedition was to annihilate violent characters and to give peace to the innocent people. Any lawlessness on the part of the soldiers is therefore an unpardonable crime. Should there be soldiers who have oppressed the people—my children—or in anyway illtreated you, the Commander has personally instructed me to say that you may bring suit against such soldiers; and if undeniable proof is produced, the culprits will be executed according to martial law. You may rely upon me—your parental official—to give them their due, etc."

Next he summoned the complainants again and with a countenance that was fit for a funeral he took up the matter in earnest. First of all he chose one of the oldest and poorest men, who had had his house burned and his leg shot through. The Magistrate told the people that as this man had been deprived of his home and his leg he ought to be given 50 taels as compensation. The sight of a great big lump of silver made the poor old man forget everything about the wrong the soldiers had done to him. Full of gratitude he knelt down and knocked his head loudly on the ground. Several others were also given silver in sums ranging from 50 to 10 taels. Having thus disposed of the most difficult cases, he took another method. A woman who had complained that her daughter was insulted was called up; and in a serious voice the Magistrate said it was a most important case. He banged the table with his palm and vowed that he would decapitate the low beast who dared to insult one of his pitiful tender subjects. However he must have proof and witnesses. Could the old woman produce witnesses to identify the soldier who committed the outrage? The woman was silent, she could not produce any witnesses. The Magistrate was most considerate. He told her to go down and think it out, for surely she could and must find a witness, as it was a question of a man's life. Several others were dealt with in much the same way, and so the wily Magistrate rapidly disposed of the complainants, giving them the idea that they all had themselves to blame if they could not obtain justice.

But the Magistrate was not to get off too easily, for in the afternoon another bunch of villagers came clamouring into the Yamen headed by two militant worthies of the 'Hsiu-t'sai' degree. These two men were well known leaders of a gang known as the 'Party of the Broken Boots.' They never missed a chance to make money, whenever they could thrust their fingers into a public pie; and this was a perfectly good chance. The Magistrate, however, was more than their match. He at once came out in full official costume and politely asked the two leaders to go into his guest room. Once seated he began his old trick of cursing the soldiers and smiting his own breast. He gave no chance to the two 'Broken Booters' to talk; and by the time he finished he had said all that they were prepared to say. So when they were asked what they wanted him to do, all they could say was that His Honour the Parental Highness knew exactly what the sufferings of the people were and it was not necessary

for them to add more. They had nothing to complain of but only wanted to know what he was going to do, as they were specially asked by the people to ascertain.

The Magistrate then assured them that he would certainly not let his people suffer without vengeance. To show that he really meant what he said, he invited the two 'Hsiu-t'sai' to sit by him and watch him hearing the cases. Thereupon he gave orders to open the main hall, and ascended the judgement platform. The country folk were brought up one by one and allowed to state their evidence. To some money was given, while to others were given promises of revenge. With their leaders taken away from them, the people became utterly helpless and quite docile. Before an hour had elapsed the hall was cleared of the dejected throng.

The 'Broken Booters' were for leaving the Yamen. But the Magistrate invited them to sit a while longer, as he had important things to talk over with them. Once inside his own room, he put on anoher face, and gravely warned the two worthies of the error of their ways in leading the people to the Yamen in the way they did. He told them that he loved his own people, but he could not tolerate anyone who tried to interfere with his official duty. He asked them if they knew how serious a crime it was to lead a riot in the very Yamen of the 'ti-fang-kuan'—the local official. He hinted that they were guilty of illegal interference with the course of justice and contempt of court. These were serious misdemeanours, and might imperil their 'blue gowns'—the badge of the 'Hsiu-t'sai'.

This was quite enough to frighten the two 'Broken Booters,' who prostrated themselves and knocked their heads on the ground. They begged the Magistrate to forgive their ignorance and "lift up his honourable hand to let them go unpunished." They promised that they would do all they could to quiet the people down and keep them in check if only His Honour the Great Master would let them off for once. So after cautioning them and giving them some idea of what he would do in case they should try to turn and rend him, the Magistrate saw them off as if nothing had happened.

But these 'Broken Booters' were a hard lot. Immediately they left the presence of the Magistrate they began to incite the country people again. They told the people that they had found out that the Commander had given the Magistrate 5,000 taels to be distributed among them, and that a large amount had gone into the pockets of the Magistrate. Upon hearing this those who had not received anything gathered together in consultation with the 'Broken-Booters.' They agreed to invade the Yamen the next day, and to tear down the 'tablet of virtuous administration' if the Magistrate insisted upon pocketing the money.

Accordingly three or four hundred people gathered early next morning, and the whole crowd made for the Magistrate's Yamen Having arrived there too early they were told to wait. But they had no such patience for the Magistrate's laziness, they said, and began to beat the big drum outside of the Yamen. (It is a common practice for people to beat the drum when they have some really serious grievance to complain about). As their temper looked ugly a servant hurried into the Magistrate's chamber and told him the real danger. The Magistrate dared not come out. He sent word that some of the

elders might come in and have a heart to heart talk. But the country folk disagreed and insisted that he should come out in person. So with twenty or thirty Yamen runners all around him the Magistrate made his appearance. A chorus of grievances welcomed him. "My good people," said the Magistrate, "I know you have been wronged. Am I not trying to redress your grievances? Have I not used up all my little salary in paying for damages not done by me? Now tell me what you want. I am ready to listen to your requests." The people then pushed a man named Wang Lao-erh forward to act as spokesman. The Magistrate was much relieved to see that they were open to terms, and asked the man in the kindest voice he could command what their grievances were. The man stuttered for fully five minutes before he could say anything intelligible. He said something about impartial treatment and lives being of equal value and that they asked His Honour for his grace and benevolence.

The Magistrate knew what they were driving at, and he assured them that they could trust him for their compensation money. "You shall not suffer," said he, patting his own breast to show his own confidence in the matter. But he told them that they must go back and alter the wording of their petitions before he could persuade the Commander to give them compensation. The wording must be changed from accusing the soldiers to accusing the local 't'u-fei.' If they were willing to do that he was willing to risk his own title and rank to approach the Commander. Of course the people were willing, and the stipulations were carried out. So the trouble was temporarily tided over and the satisfied country folk returned to their homes "singing the efficacy and praising the benevolence" of the Magistrate who "loved his people like his own sons." Little did they suspect that he was the man who had deliberately brought these calamities down upon them.

CHAPTER XXX.

SWORD *versus* GOWN.

The Magistrate, though cunning, had underrated the 'Broken Booters.' He mistook them for mere rustics, and believed that they could be frightened into submission. But he forgot that they were of the class who would stab in the dark if worsted in open combat. They watched the Magistrate's every move and noted down every outrage the soldiers committed. These were not far to seek, for almost every day news came to their ears that So and So's house was broken into during the night and such and such a shop was smashed up. The soldiers evidently thought it their privilege to exact some hospitality from the townsmen after they had done with the peasants, and they made a good job of it. They were terrors to the pawnbrokers. Worthless articles, which the soldiers had looted, were pledged to them for money, at the soldiers' own valuation. A refusal meant a smash-up. Before three days had elapsed all the heavy articles which the soldiers did not want to carry with them were unloaded on the pawnbrokers at fancy prices. The butchers and provision stores suffered almost as severely. They were ordered to supply pork, fish, chicken, rice and vegetables at 'official' prices which never amounted to more than half the market value. Even then it was impossible to collect the bill before a 'commission' equal to a quarter of the nominal amount was paid.

All this and much more the 'Broken Booters' meticulously noted. They were preparing for the outbreak which came five days later. Three or four soldiers were strolling along one of the side alleys in search of pleasure when one of them called attention to a woman standing at her door. They went up to her and began to insult her by talking nonsense. The woman turned her back on them and ran inside, but in her fright she forgot to bar the door. The soldiers, nearly all half drunken or pretending to be so, followed close on her heels. Their progress was, however, stopped at the second gate by a male servant who asked them what their errand was. With a "visiting the women," they brushed the servant aside and forcibly entered the inner courtyard. Naturally a disturbance ensued in which the soldiers lost patience and hit the master of the house, who was a *literatus*, in the face. This roused the indignation of the by-standers who had been attracted to the scene by the noise. They denounced the soldiers in no uncertain tone and suggested tying them up and sending them to the Magistrate. Seeing that they would be badly used the soldiers knocked a few persons down and ran away.

Soon they returned to the place with about twenty of their comrades and took the master of the house away by force. First he was dragged before a military officer and accused of keeping a secret brothel and robbing the soldiers of their possessions. He was then formally handed over to the Magistrate with a demand that he be punished and made to produce 75 taels which he was alleged to have cunningly

stolen from the soldiers' pockets. Now the Magistrate was in a quandary. He did not dare to refuse the soldiers for fear that they might take a fancy to start a 't'u-fei' suppression campaign inside the city! On the other hand he had not the courage to make out one of the local *literati* to be a brothel-keeper. However, he received the military officer's big red card with good grace and returned his compliments with his own card, saying that he would look into the matter.

The *literatus*, who had been threatening and fuming since he arrived at the Yamen, was set free as soon as the soldiers were gone. He at once demanded the arrest of the soldiers in order to avenge his disgrace. The Magistrate apologized and tried to explain. But it was of no avail. He would not agree to anything short of a public thrashing of the offending soldiers. He told the Magistrate that if he could not do it he would take the matter into his own hands. With many promises of reparation and expressions of regret the Magistrate sent the gentleman back to his house in his own chair.

Upon arriving at his home the *literatus* found the 'Broken-Booters' waiting for him. They were all sympathy for the unfortunate man, and all agreed that something ought to be done to punish the responsible officials. After a general consultation they decided to ask for the help of a certain Tan Kang, a leading member of the gentry. Originally the 'Broken-Booters' had not cherished any kind feelings towards Tan; for Tan was influential and had always despised them as scavenger-curs. But this time they had to forget their grudge and approach humbly the mighty gentry.

Accordingly the *literatus* called on Tan and told him all about the recent incident. For Tan had just returned from a visit to his distant nephew who was a Prefect. In order to be thoroughly informed of the real facts they sent for the 'Broken-Booters' and held a council of war. They decided that the *literatus* should lodge a formal complaint while the 'Broken-Booters' were to induce the shop-keepers to join in a general petition to the Prefect and the provincial authorities. Meanwhile Tan promised to use his influence in applying pressure at the different Yamens to bring about the downfall of the Commander. They all agreed to let the Magistrate go, as he had proved himself an obliging official and a good accomplice in squeezing the 'little people.'

At the same time the Magistrate was busy too. He first called on the Prefect, who refused to take any responsibility. He told the Magistrate to see the Commander and present the case with care, lest he put in a word in his report to their disadvantage. So the Magistrate hastened to the Commander's place. He was met with a torrent of abuse even before he broached the subject. The Commander rated him soundly for his neglect in not keeping his city free from houses of ill-fame, and so giving his brave soldiers much trouble. He said that he had been fully informed of the way in which his troops had been treated, and he demanded that the Magistrate make good their losses. He added that he was doubtful whether the Magistrate was not responsible for the unsettled condition of the city and its vicinity. For as long as he allowed suspicious characters to remain in the city and carry on illegal business, he could not hope to have peace. With an assumption of great and offended dignity he dismissed the Magistrate with a caution to keep his people orderly.

Disgusted, the Magistrate returned to his Yamen. Just when he was about to send for the leading member of the gentry, a letter came from the very person whom he wanted to see. He tore open the envelope in haste and glanced at its contents. Without uttering a single word he sent a man with his own card to invite Tan for a consultation on an important matter. Half an hour later Tan came and they had a secret conference for two hours. As soon as Tan left the Yamen, the Magistrate dispatched a telegram to the Governor of the Province in the name of the leading gentry of the city. The telegram said nothing about outrages or any other unpleasant things. But it requested the authorities to withdraw the troops at once as the 't'u-fei' had already been suppressed, and there might be disturbances if the troops remained too long in the city.

A few days later an official dispatch reached the Commander, instructing him to return to the provincial capital and to leave a small detachment outside of the city as a permanent garrison. The Commander and his troops left the city the next day, but not until the Magistrate had done his duty in giving the soldiers a supply of wine and plenty of pork for a farewell feast.

Once the soldiers left the city the gentry began their campaign of revenge. They persuaded the Magistrate to forward all their formal complaints to the Governor, and at the same time Tan wrote to his friends in the Capital. As usual the Governor sent a special official to investigate, and the Magistrate had to spend more money in entertaining him. This investigator spent a month in that city seeing sights, visiting brothels and attending feasts. All the investigation he did was to glance at the official documents kept in the Magistrate's Yamen. These documents of course did not contain any reference to the soldiers' conduct except the two petitions from the *literati* and the gentry. So after having a good time at Yenchow the investigator returned to the Capital with the report that "though there was ground for suspicion, he could not find definite proof. There might have been a quarrel or two between the soldiers and the shop-keepers, but the soldiers were always kept well in hand."

The investigation over, the Commander submitted his report of 'meritorious service.' The report gave a graphic account of the fight outside of Yenchow. After describing how numerous the rebels were and how bravely his soldiers fought, the report concluded with a recommendation for the promotion of twenty or thirty officers. As to the Commander himself, he was not worthy of any merit and asked not to be mentioned. Attached to the report was a list of minor recommendations. This contained something like 500 names for each of which a minor military rank was recommended. Of course the personal servants, cooks, porters, and even some of the higher coolies of the Commander and his secretarial staff were also 'mentioned in despatches.'.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Decline and Fall of the Commander.

The Commander, after submitting his report, addressed himself to the congenial task of making up his accounts. The accounts that had been kept day by day he found unsatisfactory, owing to certain discrepancies between the credit and the debit side. Besides, the accountant, a simple minded merchant, did not understand the spirit of official accountancy. So the task was handed over to a friend of the Governor's, who greatly simplified the process. He put his heart into compiling the lists of expenditure, and produced page after page, with as much pride as if he had been reciting a well-memorised passage from the classics before an exacting scholar. The original accounts were only enough to give him a starting point. His scope was limited by nothing but his imagination. I have heard of foreign methods of book-keeping said to be immune to tampering. I wonder what a foreigner would say to this gentleman's methods—unhindered by vouchers or receipts, which appeared or were suppressed at his sweet will. He turned out accounts, bills, receipts and vouchers to cover an expenditure of 300,000 taels; mostly out of his inner consciousness, under the stimulus of opium. Twenty clerks, each at a table, sat about him, while from his opium bed he directed each what to write and where to account for it. The Commander assisted in the good work by sending in occasional memoranda of useful purchases that might have been made. Everything went in. Since his men, under his able generalship, had managed without these supplies, he might be said to have a negative claim to the money that would have bought them! So the pious compilation grew. It seemed almost a shame that in the end the Governor should pass the accounts without scrutiny. "Approved," he wrote generously at the foot of every page. "Pay accordingly."

The suppression of the 't'u-fei' thus gloriously consummated, the Commander possessed his soul in patience, waiting for the just reward in the way of promotion that should be his. In a month's time arrived the much-longed for Imperial decree, sanctioning the promotion of the "diligent and war-worn officers" according to the list of recommendations jointly submitted by the Viceroy and Governor. The Commander was at the same time informed of the Imperial wish that he propose a special list of the "more faithful" ones. These satisfactory despatches were the occasion of much legitimate gratulation and appropriate festivity. Official thanks were tendered by juniors to seniors. Resplendent buttons of rank appeared promiscuously, and in the hats of the lucky peacock feathers were perceived to grow. More than one valiant warrior, hitherto only a 'little devil,' now strutted in all the glory of his first official costume.

Their celebrations had just reached the most rapturous stage, when there fell upon them like a thunderbolt the news that some

kill-joy Censor had disclosed the cold facts of the Yenchow campaign, and that two Imperial Commissioners were on their way to Hangchow. All was confusion. The wildest rumours had currency. The official circle talked of nothing else. "Reliable information" was to be had fresh every morning—always different. Even the Governor was perturbed. He sent private telegrams to Peking, and the disquieting answer came back that the case was considered serious.

Couriers arrived, and aides, to make dispositions for the quartering of the Commissioners. At their approach, the Governor at the head of all his officials went out to receive them at the landing stage, and to receive with due respect the Imperial decree; but the Commissioners went straight to their temporary Yamen, and announced that as they bore the Imperial commands on their persons, no visitors would be received. The Governor himself was not granted more than the briefest word, and even the staff of the mysterious Commissioners were forbidden to have any intercourse with outsiders. No hint of who was suspected was allowed to get abroad, and two trusty wardens were stationed at the gate to order the comings and the goings of the thoroughly awed official callers. Every visitor was required to state his name and business in writing.

This atmosphere of secrecy intensified the fear in the minds of the guilty officials. They spent sleepless nights endeavouring to guess the significance of these elaborate precautions and preparations; but the Commissioners were not open to even the most insidious approaches.

To add to the general alarm, official instructions were given on the third day to prepare ten sets of torturing implements for immediate use. Then the senior Magistrate was ordered to have a sufficient number of Yamen runners and executioners on hand. This looked like real business, and the Commander was "unable to keep quiet either sitting or standing." Many were his endeavours to bribe the porter or the chief of the Yamen police to "just give him a hint of what the Commissioners were after," but for the first time and at last he found even money of no avail.

On the fifth day a long list was sent to the Governor with the request to summon all the persons named to the provincial capital within five days. Further, all occupants of official posts were to be relieved and handed over to the senior Magistrate and kept under surveillance. Among those in the list were the Governor's two private secretaries, his aide-de-camp, the Commander, all his staff, the Prefect, the Magistrate, some members of the Yenchow gentry and a large number of officers. Upon the receipt of this news nearly all the guilty officials went to the Governor's Yamen and begged him to intervene. But alas, the Governor could do nothing. He was afraid that he himself was implicated, as so many of his subordinates were marked down. They were indeed like the fly which has just had its head nipped off.

The suspense was kept up for ten days, while the Commissioners made no move. They simply closed the gates of the Yamen and spent their time in singing theatrical songs and playing chess. The documents they had sent for lay on the table untouched. Not one of the witnesses summoned was examined. To the outsiders it was a mystery; but to the inside men it was only a strategic move. For on

the eleventh day the Commissioners' staffs began to have a little freedom to see their friends. They took care, however, to remain in the Yamen during the day. At first they only consented to attend private dinners given by their intimate friends. But gradually they mixed with new acquaintances more and more until some of them became fairly well known in local society, As was to be expected, the friends of the implicated officials tried their best to sound these men. But they were still unable to get anything satisfactory out of them.

Among the acquaintances of the private secretary of the Senior Commissioner was a man named Chiao—an 'out of time' minor official. He and the secretary were given the degree of 'Chu-jen' in the same year, and they know each other well. The secretary was at his place almost every evening. This was soon made known to the Governor and other officials. A consultation took place between them and they decided to utilize the services of Chiao. Now Chiao was a very quiet and unassuming man. He was never looked upon by any of the officials as of any use. The post of Chief of the City Guards was given to him, simply because no one else cared to have it. Only once a year—on New Year's day—had he any chance of speaking to the Governor. But now he was soon to become the centre of official activities in Hangchow.

He was playing with his grandchildren one day, as he was wont to do, when a messenger arrived with an official despatch, and with unusual respect presented it. He was surprised, because he had not seen a despatch for the last three or four years. With trembling hands he opened it and glanced quickly down the lines. He would not believe his eyes, which he rubbed with the end of his old sleeves to be sure he was not day-dreaming.

Upon finding the despatch was true, he ran to his wife and told her that he had been appointed Director of the Cashier's Office and co-Director of the Military Staff of the Governor. He immediately dressed up and went to the Governor's Yamen to tender his thanks.

The Governor, formerly so inaccessible, at once invited him in and gave him much 'rice soup to drink' (flattery). Seeing that his boots were soiled the Governor asked him if he came on foot; and when told that such was the case, the Governor said that it would not look well for an official in his present position to walk, and offered him his chair. Chiao was overwhelmed by the kindness of the Governor, but politely declined with the excuse that, not being a prefect, should not use a green covered chair. Finally he gratefully accepted the offer of the Governor's son's chair. He was told by the Governor, when leaving, to call at the Yamen next day, as there was a great deal of official business that needed attention

The next day he presented himself at the Governor's Yamen, and was immediately received by his superior, who ushered him into his own private study. The Governor insisted that Chiao should take off his hat, as the weather was somewhat hot. They then sat down and talked about a number of unimportant things. After a little while a servant came in and asked if His Excellency wished to have his 'tien-shin' (a light lunch) brought in. Thereupon the Governor invited Chiao to join him in having a little refreshment.

But just before they sat down to the meal the Governor suggested that they 'loosen their garments,' that is take off the official costume. When he was told that Chiao had not brought his civilian coat, he at once gave orders to have his new gown brought out for Chiao. It fitted him well, and the Governor, desiring to show his affection and esteem, smilingly persuaded Chiao to accept it as a little present.

Naturally Chiao was more than grateful and thanked the Governor again and again, saying that he was unworthy of His Excellency's benevolence. The Governor, however, took it very casually. He told Chiao that he wished that all officials were like him. But alas, they had involved him in a serious case. The Governor sighed deeply. Chiao was just then wondering what he could do to show the Governor that he was really grateful. He replied earnestly that he did not think a man so just and upright as His Excellency should suffer for the shortcomings of others. The Governor replied that he was not afraid, for he had nothing to fear. But the whole thing looked too ridiculous, and it would be a disgrace to officialdom to have so many officials involved in the matter. He pointed out that if the case were not handled discreetly, it might prove disastrous for the Hangchow official circle. It was the minor officials who would suffer, and he did not like to see it. This statement made Chiao believe all the more that the Governor was an unselfish man. He suggested that if His Excellency wished, he might try what he could do to make overtures to the Imperial Commissioner or his secretary. This the Governor was willing to do. He told Chiao that as long as his poor subordinates could get off easily he would not mind spending some money. Confirmed with this assurance, Chiao left the Governor's presence and returned home.

He found many unknown officials waiting at his house when he returned. These he had no time to see, as he had to make ready for the secretary, who would be there in the evening. He was too grateful to the Governor to do anything else. Evening came, and with it Chuan—the secretary of the Commissioner. Chuan had heard of the Governor's sudden fancy for Chiao, and after the usual greetings he asked Chiao how he liked his new post. Chiao was a simple-minded man, and so did not notice the significant tone of Chuan's inquiry, but broached the subject straight away. Being unfamiliar with official circumlocution, he told Chuan that the Governor was really a good man, and that he deserved every consideration. He tried to make Chuan understand that the Governor was not to blame for the crime, whatever it was. Chuan laughingly asked Chiao how he knew that the Governor was not implicated when he did not even know what the crime was. Chiao blushed and said it was impossible for a man like the Governor to do anything mean. However, he wanted to know, if possible, what the accusations were, and offered to compensate the secretary if he would divulge the information. Chuan protested that he was quite willing to oblige his old friend, but his colleagues were not. But when Chiao told him that the Governor was willing to empty his pockets, he named 20,000 taels as the price for a copy of the Censor's denunciations. This Chiao agreed to pay, on condition that Chuan let him have the copy that night. The words were barely out of his mouth before Chuan produced a

copy from his bosom, but Chiao had to sign a promissory note for the amount before he could have it.

Even with this private information, Chuan warned his friend, it would not be possible to evade the enquiry, but he believed that it could be made to affect only a few minor officials intead of the really big offenders. When asked how much that would cost, Chuan said 2,000,000 taels. Poor Chiao's mind could not visualise such a sum; he could only ask to refer to his patron, and so the interview closed.

Eager to show how faithful he was, Chiao went to the Governor's Yamen the same evening and reported progress. The Governor was well pleased, and praised him highly. He told Chiao that 20,000 taels for the copy was quite reasonable; but 2,000,000 taels for hush-money was, he said, unheard of. He was more convinced that the price was unreasonable after he had finished reading the copy. He was for braving it out, as otherwise it would not be long before another denunciation would be made, and perhaps they would then be asked to pay twice as much. However, his subordinates, who had waited outside and heard the news, came in and begged him not to be rash, but let them pay the sum between themselves. The Governor, though brave in tongue, was a coward at heart. He gave in and let them do as they thought best.

The message was conveyed to the Commissioners. They readily agreed. An office was established in Chiao's house for the purpose of assessing prices. As soon as the news was out that the Imperial Commissioners were willing to discuss terms, officials of all sorts and grades flocked to Chiao's house. The saying became true that 'the gate of the Emperor's servant is busy as a market.' Both Chiao and Chuan did a good business, for on every 1,000 taels they put on 200 more, 100 for each. Five days later the 1,000,000 mark was passed, and at the end of the half month the stipulated 2,000,000 taels were more than fully paid up. Needless to say that the Commander paid the highest price. Three quarters of his pickings from the campaign went to keep his blue button on his head. The others paid various sums according to the worth of their posts. As for the Magistrate of Yenchow, he lost his position, together with a few of the minor military officers who could not pay. But the Magistrate did not lose much by his disgrace. Because he called on the Commander immediately aftor his dismissal and blackmailed him to the extent of 30,000 taels.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE ETERNAL FEMININE.

It is generally acknowledged that most of the many dynasties of China were ruined or betrayed by the irresponsible eunuchs and court favourites. Eunuchs have gambled with the attractions of the fair sex to secure wealth and power, and among the Courts of antiquity the love of women was always the origin of decadence. It is sad to think that in spite of repeated warnings from the brushes (pens) of the historians of all ages, sovereigns and courts continue to own allegiance to paint and powder. At this day, the taking of concubines to almost any number is practically legal. Even many of the so-called scholars of our time are not immune, but indulge their desires under the excuse of obedience to that precept of the sage that 'Of the three unfilial acts, the state of being without an heir is the basest.'

The evil is not so much in the fate of the concubines themselves, as in the effect on their lords and masters. Indeed, concubines are usually not only well treated, but spoiled and indulged. They have more liberty than any legal wife, and are more deferred to, except on formal occasions. Best of all, the concubine who is taken after the charms of the wife have begun to wane has a power over her husband that can be used for all manner of intrigues. The story of Governor Chuei of Soochow is a case in point.

Chuei had a reputation as a 'passion devil'—a Solomon without the wisdom. He had already an establishment of six before his promotion to the Governorship of a province; but with his accession to power his ideas increased in scope. Before very long the size of his establishment was doubled. These six acquisitions did not cost him much, as four of them were presents from subordinates. The last upon the scene was she with whom we are concerned, and she was a belle of the Foochow Road, a native of Soochow, and known as Madame Twelve.

Madame Twelve was as clever as she was beautiful, and far more ambitious. Knowing the opportunities of an high official's favourite, she thought the chance of her life was at hand when the Taotai of Shanghai purchased her as a birthday present for the Provincial Governor. As soon as she arrived at her new home she set about to make her position commanding. In a short time she could do as she pleased with the 'passion devil,' and could twist her captive around her slender fingers. As her influence grew over him, it extended commensurately over the inmates of the Yamen, all of whom sought her favour and were willing to pay or to serve her. She disdained small game, however, and reserved her powers till they could be adequately employed. An alliance with the Little Second Squire soon provided opportunities. The Little Second Squire was the Governor's boy servant. Prior to the advent of Madame Twelve

he commanded the most private approaches to the Governor, for those who sought 'handsome' posts and were willing to secure them with the aid of the 'square holed brother'—(cash, money). The two, leagued together, carried on a brisk trade in positions and promotions, one working from within and one from without the Yamen.

They chanced, one day, upon a deal which the private secretary was putting through with a certain salt merchant who coveted the post of director of the Copper Coin Mint, which was worth an attractive 20,000 taels a month, over and above the modest salary of 300 taels. The private secretary had almost closed with a bid of 50,000 taels when Madame Twelve and the Little Squire came in to cramp his style. They found another bidder, an Expectant Taotai from Fengtien, whose father was a junk-owner of fabulous wealth in Newchwang. He had already gone up to 60,000 taels when Madame Twelve found the other deal dangerously far advanced.

Noticing one evening that the Governor was in high good humour, she asked him why. "Oh, nothing" said the Governor. "Just that you look so nice to-night." But Madame Twelve knew well that after a new appointment her face became unusually pretty. "Perhaps," she said sulkily, you are getting a Madame Thirteen." And she began to weep. Chuei repented. "My dear," he said, "if you really want to know, I have just decided to give an appointment; a man has been found for the Copper Coin Mint. That's all." Pretty Madame Twelve took quite an interest in the news, and asked innocent questions about the appointment. Then the Little Squire came with the document in question all drawn up, and ready for the name to be filled in and the Governor's signature affixed. This was work that should have been kept for the study, but the Little Squire had gradually accustomed the Governor to attend to business while in the apartments of Madame Twelve, who was thus kept the better informed of affairs.

The boy handed the papers to the Governor, and began to grind the ink on the slab, when Madame impatiently snatched the ink-stick from him, saying she knew well enough how to make the ink for her beloved lord. The Little Squire discreetly withdrew.

As the Governor prepared to fill in the name, Madame placed her hands over the paper. Appealingly she asked him for a favour. She would like this position to go to T'ang, the son of the junk-owner. "Nonsense," said the Governor. He wanted to be firm, but he added weakly that it was "no matter for a woman to interfere in." "But I *want* to interfere," said Madame Twelve.

"Don't be childish," said the Governor, "This is official business."

"I know what kind of official business," said Madame. "Why can't you let me do some official business for once? I need some pin-money."

"How much do you want?" asked the Governor, desperately. "I'll give you some."

"Well, I don't want money," said Madame, shifting her ground. "I want to know if I really find favour in your eyes. If I do, you will surely grant me this."

The Governor was unwilling to accede to his favourite's entreaties. Hang it all, a promise was a promise, and he hadn't the

shadow of an excuse. So he told her. Besides, the secretaries would all know, and they would laugh at him for being woman-ridden.

"There you are," said Madame. "That just shows it. That's all you care. You care more for those rice-pot secretaries of yours." She went into a corner and sobbed as though her heart would break. The Governor, distressed, tried to comfort her. He promised silks, and furs and jewels and anything she wanted except just that.

Finding that it did not work, he decided to be severe, and sternly flapping his long sleeves he stalked away to fill in and complete the document. Madame watched from the corner of her eye. She thought he was bluffing; but he began to write. Really losing her temper, she dashed across the room, snatched the paper, and tore it across. Then, realising what she had done, she threw herself at the Governor's feet and begged for mercy.

Poor man, what could he do? He simply couldn't say anything harsh. So he patted her on the head and said that after all she was still nothing but a child. So they made it all up, and the Governor to his great relief got away from the subject for a while. But gradually she worked round to it again. She asked him if he didn't know T'ang, and how sensible it would be to favour a young man whose father was so wealthy. "You don't know your own subordinates," she said. "You can't write T'ang's name correctly." To humour her, the Governor wrote it in 'grass character' (cursive script), but she could not read that, and made him write it out again. Carelessly she took a half-sheet of the torn document, and held it down on the desk between her palms for him to write in the plainhand. He laughed at the torn paper over which they had quarrelled, and wrote. But the sharp-witted concubine had held the paper so that the name was filled into the proper blank space, completing the document. She laughed, and threw the sheet from her, and the Governor thought no more of her whim. But after they had retired Madame lay awake; when the Governor began to snore, she slipped away, gathered up all the torn paper, and gave it to the Little Squire, who was patiently waiting outside the door, confident in his partner's ability to attain her ends in time.

The next morning the astonished Governor was informed that T'ang Taotai was waiting upon him to tender thanks for his new appointment. The Governor was first puzzled, and then he fairly gasped.

"Thank me for the appointment?" he shouted, "why, who gave him any appointment?"

Madame Twelve woke up then, and rubbed her famous eyes. She asked pettishly if the heavens had fallen. They told her the mystery, and she laughed impudently. "I sent it," she confessed. "I made you sign it, just to get my own back. It doesn't matter, one way or the other." The indignant but uxorious Governor was fairly tricked, but as he was bound to be laughed at either way, he made the best of it for the sake of domestic peace—since he could not get on without Madame—and accepted things as they stood.

"We-l-l, he said, we-ell.—all right."

Madame looked her prettiest.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Battle of the Beauties.

Governor Chuei was as fickle as the wild bee. Even while still under the influence of Madame Twelve, he was keeping an eye open for a possible successor, and it so happened that his ninth concubine's slave girl came particularly under his notice. Compared with Madame Twelve, she was by no means a beauty; but she had an attraction all her own. A rustic beauty, she might never have been noticed among girls of her own class; but side by side with the delicate and artificial adornments of the Governor's household, the difference of her charms at once drew attention. Certainly they drew the Governor's. At first he gave her gifts, ostensibly for her good service to Madame Nine; which was the more remarkable, as for three months he had not been near that lady's apartments. The jealousy of Madame Twelve was at once aroused, and after behaving restlessly for a while, she openly charged the Governor with 'hunting wild pheasant's meat.' Madame Nine, on the contrary, was rather pleased than otherwise. Herself a discarded favourite, she welcomed anything that would discomfit her immediate supplanter; any fuel would do to 'smoke the vixen's hole.' So she actually dressed up and coached her handmaiden, with the result that the Governor's visits to her apartments became noticeably frequent.

Madame Twelve wept. She scolded, she browbeat the Governor, she threatened him, 'gave him rice-soup to drink,' and what with one thing and another, quite lost her head. She might have known how such behaviour would destroy her own power. In the end she went so far as to quarrel with the Governor over a sum of money which he had promised her for a nunnery of which she was a patron. They were already having high words, when with piercing screams in rushed Madame Twelve's own favourite slave girl. Her hair was down, and her face scratched and bleeding. The Governor slipped away; but spoilt this wise action by going to the chambers of Madame Nine. There he found the new favourite, Ah Pao, also in tears. She was complaining to her mistress of the wickedness of Tsuei-ling, the other slave, when she noticed the Governor; which spurred her to more frenzied wails. She protested that if she were to be mocked so by another slave she would take her own life.

"There you are," said Madame Nine, turning to him; "that's what you might expect from Twelve's maid."

But he was not destined to hear the story then. Shouts were heard at the door, and in burst Madame Twelve, dragging her slave by the wrist and shrieking that she would have at Ah Pao, the 'nail in her eye;' it must be one life or the other. She pounced with a whoop on the poor girl; slapped her, tore her hair, pulled her ears, and gouged her with her nails. The Governor was paralysed with

consternation, but Madame Nine with great presence of mind went grimly at Tsuei-ling, her rival's slave, whom she handled in a way fearful to behold. The dainty room was littered with wreckage and filled with moans, curses and cries for mercy. The slave girls, who had no spirit and would never have dared return blow for blow, dodged frantically about the room; one ducked under the table, upsetting it, with all the cups, clocks and water-pipes on top. By this time the other ladies of the house were present, beholding the scene with gratification. One or two of the older slaves might have interfered, but the young ladies would not permit such a thing.

Neither girl had the sense to make for the door, but at length Ah Pao found refuge under the massive red-wood bed; immediately joined there by the other fugitive, the two began to carry on the war personally, at last, with nails and teeth.

Madame Twelve, unable to make her quarry break cover, looked for the door bar, wherwith to dislodge her. Madame Nine happening to have thought of the same weapon for the same purpose, they met at the same spot. First they tugged, and then they closed and fought, spitting viciously in each other's faces. The Governor, having at last recovered his wits, would have intervened, but he was a scholar, with long fingernails which it would have been a shame to damage. But he shouted and stamped until finally the servants interposed; but to pull the ladies apart was no easy task. The Governor raved, swearing at the servants for a lot of useless rice-consumers. Madame Twelve, who was getting the better of matters, would brook no interference. She shook off the abject menials, and fixed her teeth in the arm of Madame Nine. The Governor could no longer restrain himself. Trembling in the knees, he yet mustered courage to try to separate the viragos, with the result that Madame Twelve, immediately diverting her attention, bumped her head smartly into his paunch, bringing him to the ground and falling on top of him. When about to renew her attack, she noticed that he was doubled up in great pain, with his eyes closed. Afraid that she had done something serious, she turned around and began to abuse Madame Nine for pushing her into the Governor's bosom, so felling him. The anxious servants rescusitated the agonised Governor, who, gasping and blinking, pointed at Madame Twelve and shook his head. At that she burst into loud weeping and fled the room.

All hands heaved up the Governor from the floor, and restored him to the dignity of his chair. Madame Nine, also frightened, had left, and the two slave girls had already scurried away. The attendants began to breathe more freely, thinking that all the champions had fought each other to a standstill. But in a moment one came flying with the tidings that Madame Twelve had swallowed opium, to rid herself of this unjust world, and was dying in agony. The Governor forgot his own injuries and hastened to her side. There he beheld her rolling on the ground, apparently *in articulo mortis.* Her mouth was smeared with black, and her distorted features unrecognisable.

The Governor himself tried to make her swallow the emetic brought by a hastily-fetched doctor, and at last, after many abject promises of redress, managed to make her gulp some of it down. The

doctor recognised what was on her mouth, and guaranteed, smart fellow, that she would live; which she did, having swallowed nothing more lethal than one of those nasty sticky tonics which look and smell like nothing on earth. It was the easiest money the doctor had made for a long time.

But the Governor was so thoroughly cowed that he stayed in her room for three days, till he was convinced that she was calm enough not to do anything rash.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

VARIOUS DEVILS AND A FORTUNE TELLER.

It was borne in upon the reluctant Governor that he must get rid of his favourite slave. Short of this sacrifice, all his endeavours to mollify Madame Twelve were unavailing. She remained in bed, afflicted with obdurate ailments. Why should she be so unhappy, with every luxury at her command? She suffered the heartache of the disappointed woman. The cause of it all was the slave girl, Ah Pao. Her illness grew with the passing days. But when this mere indisposition did not apparently affect the Governor, she became abruptly delirious, though she had no fever. Also she starved herself. And when the Governor visited her, that was the sign for a paroxysm of the delirium. Whenever he addressed her, the unfailing answer was the muttered name of Ah Pao.

The Governor was gravely concerned. And though, like most scholars, he believed that the gods and spirits of the underworld have the same sort of respect for terrestrial powers and potentates that they have for the authorities of the Kingdom of Nine Springs, yet he became inclined to diagnose the decline of Madame as a case of daemonic possession. True, he had often said that he feared no devil, being a scholar and a 'square' and true gentleman; but the convictions based on his consciousness of integrity forsook him when he was confronted by the sight of his most cherished concubine on the bed of affliction. He was ready to be persuaded by the amahs and female servants that an evil spirit had crept into her heart, which only the adjuration of beneficent deities could exorcise.

So word was sent to every temple in the city, Taoist and Buddhist, to have the sacred prescriptions chanted for nine days before the Buddha and the Yu Huang Ta Ti. Appropriate charms, illegibly scrawled in vermilion on slips of yellow paper, were brought home from the priestly sources of healing and placed under her pillow. The devils remaining secure in their lodgment in face of this attack, some of the charms were burned over a bowl of clear water, and the ashes, in the water, forced down the throat of Madame. The audacious devils were contemptuous of even this concentrated infusion of holiness. Madame's stock of delirium was not yet exhausted.

Then an old slave suggested to the disconsolate Governor that a fortune-teller be summoned. Her own grandmother, she urged, had been similarly afflicted, but after the Taoist priests had sent away the spirit of terror, her star was restored to its normal orientation, and she recovered rapidly. All the other old women in the place joined in with a cackle of confirmatory reminiscence, affirming their reliance on star worship. The Governor was not only startled, but incredulous. He believed that His Majesty had a star, and that every prominent and ranking official of the first degree had a star, even as himself; but that a woman and a concubine should arrogate

to herself astral pretensions was to him preposterous. He said as much.

But the old woman who had started the discussion on this tack was better up in this line of knowledge than the scholarly Governor himself. She admitted that Madame Twelve, as a woman, was not comparable to a man, certainly not to a man so egregiously male as His Excellency the Governor Chuei. She was informed that it took the virtues of ten incarnations to establish a title to be born as a woman, and another good ten generations of piety to earn promotion to the rank of lady. Yet Madame Concubine, though not a lady married in a red sedan chair, had been esteemed a fitting ornament to the riches and happiness of His Excellency; which surely was warrant sufficient for the possession of a star. The Governor was persuaded. He told them all in a dignified way that they were old women, and naturally believed in old wives' tales; but he let them have their own way.

So a fortune-teller came. He was blind, but his ears were very sharp, and he reposed just confidence in a vast experience. He was celebrated for his accurate descriptions of things he could not see. (It was all, he said, due to his system of reading birthdays and birth hours.) When he came into a house, he would sit down and start to tune his guitar, the guitar that all blind men in China carry. While he was making his leisurely preparations, he would draw the women of the house into conversation. Then he would ask if there were any sickness in the house, as he could smell an air of bad omen. If there were, the women would be duly edified, but if there were not, he would solemnly warn them that there was an evil spirit hanging around, which would get someone if they were not careful. And from their remarks he would draw the information necessary for his professional patter.

In this case everything was made easy. It was the common knowledge of a delighted populace that the Governor was having trouble with the latest favourite among his concubines, and from the servants' chatter it was evident that this was the woman with whose case he was to deal. He spun his yarn accordingly. The lady in question, he said, was destined to the company of a 'kuei-jen'—a person of high rank; but she must pass through tribulation that very year. Here the women chimed in, and said that indeed she was ill at that very moment. "Yes," said the fortune-teller, "she has a hard time in front of her. But never fear, I divine that her good star will rise, and see her through it safely." The women were encouraged to ask him the cause of the illness. "Last month," said the seer, "she met an evil spirit when she was travelling in a northerly direction."

The women confabulated together, and discovered that she had caught a cold when walking in the garden one day. That, undoubtedly, was it.

The fortune teller confirmed them. That must have been when and where the bad spirit met her. But it had to wait for an occasion when her good spirit was off its guard. The chance came one day when she was down-hearted. The women again applauded his accuracy. It was true that she fell ill after a little 'unhappiness.'

"That's just what I was going to say," put in the fortune-teller hastily; "and there's someone about whose destiny conflicts with that of the patient. As long as the two are thrown together without proper safeguard, she cannot regain her proper serene health."

He went on in this strain for half an hour, getting information out of the garrulous women and giving it back to them suitably coloured. The person with the evil star must either take another name or leave the house. Otherwise the afflicted lady's malady would continue. He also told them a lot of things that were entirely off the track; but the women, being women, skipped all that.

The women, with natural gusto, set to work to patch up the domestic damage. The evil star could be no other than Ah Pao. It was decided to report to the Governor accordingly. Ah Pao was not popular with her fellow-slaves, whose instinctive jealousy had been aggravated by the airs she put on when the Governor began to notice her. Poor Governor Chuei was reluctant to do what was obviously, from the beginning, the only thing to do. But as Madame Twelve, what with her starvation and her tempers, was rapidly sinking, he had to act. But what to do with the poor girl he really did not know. He wanted to do the right thing by her, because he had been really quite fond of her, though he had not been able to set her in the place of Madame Twelve, when it came to the point. Then a simple solution occured to him. He smiled a smile of great relief, not unmixed with pride.

"I will marry her to some good man," he said. "That will settle things. Yes, that's a scheme."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE WINNER STAYS; THE LOSER IS MARRIED OFF.

The Governor was indeed a man of sincere sentiment, the soul of chivalry. Once he had loved the maid enough to desire her as a thirteenth inmate of his harem; but with that hope departed, he meditated solemnly and long on the problem of her future happiness. She must be married to an official, if possible. A complacent party might have been hard to find, had not Madame Nine made the position much easier. She had no child herself, and the slave girl had earned her gratitude by discomfiting Madame Twelve to such an extent. The first plan frustrated, it occurred to her that it would be an excellent way of annoying the favourite were she to adopt the cause of all the trouble. The Governor fell in with this plan, though he mused with some chagrin on the different relations he might have had with Ah Pao. So it was settled, and the lucky girl was informed of her new future. She was overjoyed to become, as the adopted daughter of the Governor, a lady of title. The servants who had plotted for her downfall were put out, but they accepted the situation with philosophy, praised Ah Pao for her good heart, remarked on the virtue that she must have cultivated and stored up in her previous lives, and began to address her by her new title of respect as Pao Hsiao-chia.

The problem of her marriage was still unsettled. Scores of officials would have been delighted to receive her at the Governor's hands, but they were all opium smokers, or misers, or sluggish bookworms. The Governor was forced to look for eligibles among the military, whom he had always been inclined to look down on as a lot of unreasonable boors. But they did seem to be more promising than the civilians. There was a Major Tai, for instance; a well set up fellow of thirty, with a position of some importance in the local garrison. The Governor found him to be an engaging talker, which pleased him. He was a widower, too, which was all to the good, and he had neither parents nor children to claim his affections or his money.

The Governor asked the General in command to act as go-between, not mentioning the fact that his adopted daughter had once been a slave in his household. He said that the girl's parents had left her unprovided for, and that she had been brought up among his own children, and for fear that Tai might be embarrassed at the prospect of the alliance, he offered to provide all that was necessary, releasing the Major from all obligations in the way of presents of money or ornaments.

The General took his leave with a few appropriate words of flattery about the Governor's open-mindedness and broad-mindededess and democratic-mindedness, and departed for the Major's Yamen. Now it was unusual for a General to call so unceremonially on a junior,

but the Commanding Officer had his own way of reasoning. If Tai accepted the lady's hand, he argued, which was a certainty, then he was booked for preferment. He might soon be put over the General's head. So it behoved the General to be cordial.

The Major received his superior with surprise, which was increased when the object of the visit was made known. He was still more surprised to find the lady proposed as a free gift. It must be his smartness and fine bearing, he thought, unable to suppress a smirk. But, he reflected with suspicion, it was unheard of for a Governor to give away his daughter in so charitable a fashion. Either the lady must be afflicted with an unlucky star or with an unpresentable face. It would be a bit thick to be saddled with a wife that was pock-marked, or bald, or blind in one eye. Nor could he find anything out, for it was not proper to ask such blunt questions. The General, on the other hand, could see no possible objection. Such luck was beyond purchase, and while the Governor's favour meant an assured future, to offend him meant ruin. That settled it, and the Governor was duly informed of the successful outcome of the negotiations

The Governor was as good as his word, and Tai found himself immediately promoted to the Governor's military staff, and soon after to the post of second in command of the garrison. To clinch the understanding, 3,000 taels were paid out of the military appropriations to "repair his Yamen." Tai took the money in the spirit in which it was offered, and purchased pearl ornaments and silk dresses for his future wife. These were sent to the Governor's Yamen on a chosen lucky day, and in return he received costly presents from his betrothed, Madame Nine and the Governor.

The date of the wedding was hastened as much as possible, to relieve the awkward situation in the Governor's household. The bride's dowry, which was sufficient for all the needs of the newly married pair, was sent to her new home the day before the wedding, and the bearers of the gifts formed a regular procession. The populace turned out to admire, as the go-betweens led the way in sedan chairs, followed by a pair of ceremonial lanterns, and then the redwood bed, sofas, benches, chairs, stools, dressers, desks, tables and boxes, and chinaware, silverware, brass ware, table ornaments, bed fittings, wall hangings, carpets, food, drink and everything down to chopsticks. According to usage, the bride ought not to eat or drink anything not her own for three days after the wedding, and she and her slave girl—for a bride ought if possible to take a slave with her to her husband's home—must not wear anything not made with her own materials, for three years. The dowry of Ah Pao, sometime slave girl, looked as if it ought to be as good as the boast.

The next day Major Tai called at the Governor's Yamen, accompanied by the go-betweens, to pay his respects to his father-and mother-in-law. The Governor excused himself, saying he was overtired, but Madame received him and accepted his kowtow with great unction, for being herself childless, she would not have such another chance of receiving reverence and honour.

Immediately the bridegroom left the place, preparations were made to send his bride after him. As usual, she was given a feast just

before she was placed in the sedan chair. The occasion was robbed of a good deal of the traditional rejoicings by the jealousies of the Governor's real daughters, and their mothers. They all refused to attend the feast, and made remaks that hurt Ah Pao's feelings so that she began to cry. Her eyes were still red when she got into the chair. No one was seriously worried about that, for, as the common people say, the more a bride weeps at the time, the happier is the future augured for her. The weeping of the bride is, indeed, taken as a thermometer, to test the temperature of her affection for her parents. At Chinese weddings the bride is bound to howl; it is the done thing. So at any rate Ah Pao earned commendations for her filially red eyes.

After much fuss and formality, she was carried off in the red chair to the Yamen of her husband, where the bridegroom's party was waiting. Obedient to custom, she stopped her weeping immediately she heard the firecrackers that announced her arrival at her destination. The ceremony of inviting the bride three times to come out of her chair was then observed, after which she was helped out and led to the hall. She could not see very well what was happening, because of the thick veil of red silk which she wore.

The prompter of the ceremonies read out an invitation to the bridegroom, in verse, and after the required number of repetitions of the invitation, a servant led him out and ushered him to the right side of the bride. They stood there side by side, worshipped heaven and earth together, and finally made obeisance to each other. Usually this part of the formalities is the most tedious, as each must pretend reluctance to kowtow to the other. They stand there sometimes for a couple of hours, face to face, while the prompter keeps on droning, "Bow, bow, bow-w-w-w. . ." Some brides trick their husbands, slightly bending the knee but immediately standing up when he kneels down. But neither the Major nor Ah Pao were such ninnies, and for their own reasons both obeyed the prompter's injunctions with docility. This over, the couple were conducted to the bridal chamber, each holding one end of a silken cord, twisted in two colours, red and green. The bridegroom had to go backwards, to pull his wife into the room.

And so, with some more fuss and kow-towing, Ah Pao entered on a new stage in her life.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The Opportunities of Matrimony.

The wedding of Ah Pao brought peace, for the moment at any rate, to the overstocked harem of the Governor. It also marked the beginning of a period of intrigue at the Yamen of the promoted second in command of the garrison. Madame Tai, not only out of gratitude to her benefactor, the Governor, but to provide her pretty self with luxuries, entered the business of selling appointments. At first she took only small commissions for herself, but with success she grew more bold. The Governor, though he hesitated at first, soon saw the value of his agent. In the Governor's Yamen Madame Tai had learned all the ropes, and was clever enough to keep her transactions clear of those of Madame Twelve and the Little Squire. The 'expectant' officials in their hundreds flocked to Tai when they saw that he had a wife who was in direct contact with the source of authority. The poor told him harrowing stories of their deserving need, and the rich, with a 'word to the wise,' simply left ingots of silver and gold with him. From an obscure officer he became a person of consequence. The scholarly class of His Majesty's servants strangely lost their contempt for the 'carnivorous ruffian' and became the admirers of the 'hero of war.' They sought his society, flattered him to gain favour, and in passing would remark that he was now in a position to help his old friends. Tai, after consulting with his wife, went after the new opportunities heart and soul.

Readers of my reminiscences must have noticed the convenience for office-seekers of an approach to one who, with a grip on the handle of the door, is yet outside the shadow of the eaves of the Yamen. But, would you believe it, there was to be yet another rendezvous for those who wished to meet the goddess of riches. It was not long before it was discovered that Madame Tai was an ardent worshipper of Buddha, particularly the Buddha of a certain temple at the South gate of the city, called the Temple of the Heavenly Ferry. This temple Madame Nine had once frequented, in the days when she was the first favourite of the Governor, and had plenty of money to spend. The priests knew Madame Tai for the person who had always accompanied her, and made it their business to gain her patronage. Not only did they call on her after her marriage to wish her luck, but they got up a special mass service especially to pray for her long life and prosperity, and humbly invited her to attend. At the same time they let the word go round of the ceremony, and Madame Tai on arriving found assembled to do her honour many of the leading ladies of the city. There were some strangers among them, but these the Priests courteously introduced as patronesses of the temple. Following up this advantage, the priests did all they could to please her, They prepared a room, a special room, in the temple, where she might rest whenever she wished. Of course she spent a lot of money on the priests, but then the priests certainly

spent a lot of money on her. It was worth their while, for every visit from her meant a gathering at the temple, and every gathering meant an inflow of revenue.

The social-priest was the master spirit who thus promoted the interests of the temple. A social-priest is a monk specially deputed to entertain guests. He must be very glib, and know how to talk to every class of patron. It is not an easy position, but there are a lot of pickings, and the social-priest of the Temple of the Heavenly Ferry, one Chih Ming, was a smart man. He was the organiser of the special mass services in honour of Madame Tai. Seekers of official preferment began to apply to him, through their wives, for introductions, and the temple of Buddha thus became the business office of the trader in positions.

Madame Tai's new business led her into many queer situations, but the most absurd was perhaps that of her relations to Madame Chu, whose husband was a deputy of the road-cleaning department. She had therefore no real standing, as the society in which Madame Tai properly moved was that of Taotais, prefects and their wives. But Chu maintained her position through playing on Ah Pao's weakness for flattery and the 'high hat'—undue praise. The attention she paid to Madame Tai's comforts was akin to motherly love or filial devotion, whichever you like to call it—motherly because she was at least twice the age of the woman she so tenderly waited on, and filial in the repectfulness with which she offered attentions.

One day Madame Tai got drunk at a feast given in her honour at the temple by a lady friend. She was taken to her resting-room and put to bed. Madame Chu stayed after all the other guests had gone, and looked after Madame Tai in the most devoted way, remaining till late in the evening, waiting for the lady to wake up. Madame Tai, though not fully recovered from the effects of the wine, was able to understand that her admirer had waited on her like a servant. In her half-maudlin state she expressed a wish to have someone of her own to attend her with such assiduity, and Madame Chu promptly wished, in the most pious manner, that she could be a daughter to her. Madame Tai laughed, and said that it was not too late to be her adopted daughter, whereupon Madame Chu without more ado kowtowed eight times, as a dutiful daughter should. Madame Tai, still laughing, received the obeisance as though it were her due.

She was surprised next day to have Madame Chu arrive at her house with four festal tables and a lot of presents. Asked what they were for, the guest only smiled, called for a red carpet to be spread on the floor, and at once prostrated herself, saying that she was paying her dutiful respects to her godmother. This provoked a good deal of laughter from the servants at hand, but Madame Chu refused to see the humour of the situation, standing very much on her dignity. In the circumstances Madame Tai could do nothing but accept the lady, a quarter of a century her senior, as an adopted daughter. This sounds like a farcical exaggeration, but compared with some things that have actually occurred in official life, it pales into insignificance.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF PLEASURE.

When Madame Chu became the adopted daughter of Madame Tai, it meant prosperous times for Deputy Chu. It was the story of Ah Pao repeated, though not on such a large scale. Madame Chu and her husband became like sub-agents for Madame Tai and her husband, who in turn were the agents of the Governor, who sold the official posts under his control and disposition. The promotion of Deputy Chu to the post of assistant examining magistrate of the Governor's Court followed, and the fortunate couple moved up from the class known as 'subordinate mixture,' the class of minor officials below the fifth grade and junior to a magistrate, to associate with the magistrates, prefects and Taotais who were the friends of Major Tai.

But how to maintain her social position was a harder problem for Madame Chu to solve than had been the getting there. For one thing, she must have the help of her husband; and she had always guarded him very jealously. She had never allowed him to go to any doubtful resort, but he must have a little freedom now. She saw that he must be friendly with the other officials if he were to succeed, and to be popular he must accept invitations to the feasts that are usually spread in the singing girl houses. So Madame Chu made an agreement with her husband that she would allow him to attend the 'flower feasts' if he would promise to return home not later than midnight. Chu accepted with joy; it was partial remission of sentence to a prisoner under life sentence.

But though at first so pleased, because the freedom had been so novel, and because also he had not the money to keep up a very hot pace, Assistant Magistrate Chu soon began to long for still less restraint. It was an awkward position, for he did not want a row with his wife, being in the first place rather fond of her and in the second place not insensible of the fact that he owed everything to her. But there is always an end to such a course.

One day Chu was invited to one of the 'flower-feasts'—as usual, he thought. But his friends, who had come to notice his early habits in retiring from the fun, and had guessed the cause, wanted to plague him. They deliberately challenged him to an all-night game of 'sparrow.' Chu, who was too drunk to make any plausible excuse and was afraid of being laughed out of town, accepted, and so spent the night with his friends at the singing girl house. The breach of rules was disastrous to Chu, because he made the closer acquaintance of a girl named Tai-yu. It was the custom that whoever stayed there must have a girl friend. At the time it was a only a formal, 'face-fashion' acquaintance, and Chu thought no more of it than of the tea he drank or the cards he played in the house.

But the girl took a real fancy to Chu. Unlike most girls of her class, she was thoughtful and watchful. For a long time she had been thinking of 'following the worthy'—getting married—but she had not found a man whom she would have trusted as a husband. The men that frequented the house were irresponsible men-about-town. They were not apt to appear either sincere or sober. She had been all the more struck by the rather backward behaviour of Chu, and his evident reluctance to accept the challenge to stay over night. She determined to have a try to win him, and the next morning after the game was over and the guests had had time for a little nap, she made an opportunity to give him a personal and earnest invitation to call again soon. Chu, a novice at the game, said, without any real intention, that he would. He wanted to get away. He was sober now, and wished he had never been trapped into staying. So he said good-bye in a preoccupied way, and went off, thinking up an excuse with which to meet his wife.

It was well he was prepared, for she was in a terrible state when he reached the house. She had evidently not slept, and her eyes were sunken and bright. But without waiting for her to upbraid him, and not seeming to notice her haggardness, Chu yawned and muttered that it was very distasteful to him to have to be up so late, playing the society man, and that he wished he were away in the hills instead of having to put up with all this boring gaiety. The well-timed remark appeased her wrath somewhat, but she looked at him narrowly, and said bitterly that it was useless to pretend disgust, when he was really having a jolly good time. Chu protested against her injustice, and turned out his pockets to show that he still had the five dollars that she had given him the morning before. This was proof positive to Madame, for she held the purse strings of the household,

Unfortunately his friends asked him whether he had had to go through the ordeal of kneeling on the footboard of the bed, as penance for his absence of the night, and he rashly boasted of the ease with which he could manage his wife. They promptly challenged him, if he were really so brave and so much the master in his home, to repeat the escapade. There was no way out, and Chu had to accept, though he made them agree to pay the reckoning, as a loss of wager. So word was sent to the house in which Tai-yu lived to make arrangements..

But Chu was not a little worried, and he wondered what his wife would have to say at his being away again so soon. The only excuse he could make up was that he was engaged on a very important case, and that it would be necessary to attend at the court all night. Luckily for him, he had never had to use the excuse before, and luckily, too, the servant whom he sent with the message, being fond of an evening at the singing house in attendance on his master, made a very convincing yarn of it. So Chu spent the evening with a heart more or less at ease.

Tai-yu was overjoyed at this second visit. She thought that perhaps Chu was really attracted towards her, and it was therefore with unusual care that she attended to his comfort. Her attentions provoked good humoured remarks from the other guests, and in turn

drew Chu's attention to the girl, of whom he thought affectionately, comparing her behaviour to the treatment he received at the hands of his wife. Occasionally he would sigh or frown, and though the others never noticed, Tai-yu was on the watch for every sign. She sighed, too, to herself.

Indeed, they got on very well together, and Tai-yu was pleased when he finally got up and asked her to play his hand for him while he rested. She was so absent-minded, though, that she played badly, and lost so fast that before long she woke Chu, and had to tell him that she was a bad partner. "Never mind," he said: "You are a good companion." She looked down on the ground, and murmured "I hope so." Then their eyes met again, and then and there began their romance.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE MAKING OF A SINGING GIRL.

The intimacy between Assistant Magistrate Chu and the singing girl Tai-yu continued to grow, and he began to call on her more frequently, even unknown to his friends. They would talk for hours, the most intimate of companions, and Tai-yu shared all his sorrows and his joys: but though always pathetically glad to see him, she always insisted on his returning to his own house for the night. She would remind him of the lateness of the hour as unfailingly as she would complain when he seemed to neglect her for a few days. She never explained what her reasons were for this behaviour; smilingly telling him that she too was afraid of the 'roar of the Ho Tung lioness' —the severe reproof of a wife.

She impressed Chu more and more with her remarkable personality, and he urged her to tell him more of herself, and the story of how a girl of her refinement and intelligence came to waste her life in such a place as a house of singing girls. After some pressing she consented to tell him the story.

Her father, she said, was a Magistrate, and his father before him had been a Prefect. Ten years before, at the age of thirteen, she went with her father when he took up a new post in Yunnan. At that time communication and means of travel were difficult, and when her father fell ill on the way, it meant disaster for the family, who could not communicate with their relatives. All their own savings had been spent while they were waiting in the metropolitan capital for the appointment, and in the extremity in which they found themselves it was necessary for the women to sell or pawn all their personal valuables. But the unfortunate official continued to grow worse, and after an expensive illness he died, in the midst of strangers and two thousand *li* from his home and his friends, leaving his family face to face with starvation.

An old and faithful family retainer whom they had with them went around to all the local Yamens and begged enough money to provide a poor coffin and some second-hand official grave-clothes in which to bury the dead man, and the Magistrate of the city interested himself in the pitiful plight of the family to the extent of raising a subscription of a few taels to help them on their journey home. They could not take the coffin with them, and it was better even not to bury it in this strange land, so they left the coffin in the charge of a local guild, which promised to keep it in its regular coffin-house for a year. Then, under the escort of the greyhaired servant, mother and daughter attempted to make the journey by boat down to Ichang, where they hoped to find an official who was the sworn-brother of the dead man.

On the way down the river, in the small boat which was all that they were able to hire, the mother herself, through sorrow and

privation, began to sicken, and though the devoted servant did all to lighten her hardships that could possibly be done, she was struck down by pneumonia, and reached Ichang only to die. The servant was reduced again to begging for a coffin, for the official whom they had hoped to find had been transferred to another post, and there was none to concern himself with the destitute orphan.

"I was not yet fourteen," said Tai-yu, "and could hardly realise fully the situation in which I was placed. The servant provided for me for a week or two, but one day he went out to seek for food, and never returned. I was terrified to show myself, but after a day in hiding in our miserable lodgings hunger drove me to try to find food for myself. A neighbour gave me shelter for a few days, and at the time, I remember, I thought him a kind and merciful man. But I know now that it was he who sold me into slavery. He told me one day that a man had come to say that he was sent by the servant, who had found employment, to fetch me to a new home. The servant, he said, had himself been ill, and was unable to come. Innocently, I followed the messenger, who made a bundle of my few poor clothes, and took me down to the river, where he placed me on board of a houseboat. Once there, his manner changed entirely, and he roughly thrust me into a cabin, showing me a knife and warning me brutally that if I made any outcry I should have my throat cut.

"The next morning the boat dropped down the river from Ichang, and after half a month of travel, during which I was never allowed out of the cabin, we reached a place where the city and the people were strangers to me, a Northern girl from Shantung. There they gave me pretty clothes, and told me to make myself look nice, as they were going to take me home. I was glad, and almost happy again; but they only wanted to make me as attractive as possible for their own purposes, for they sold me to a trader who took me to Yangchow to be made into a singing girl. It was at Yangchow that I learned the arts of my trade. The refined training of my early days made me a success, and after two years of it there I had got enough money into my own hands to run away and come here.

"For a year I carried on a singing house of my own, but owing to my refusal to entertain the official set I incurred their enmity, ran into debt and was finally forced to sign myself away into life service to the proprietor of this house. But my heart is not in this business," said Tai-yu, brushing away the tears; "I would go away if only I could find a man whom I could trust."

"Alas," said Chu, "I wish I could help you. If I had known at first that you were from a respectable family, I should never have treated you like an ordinary singing girl."

"I do not blame anyone for my misfortunes," said Tai-yu. "I believe it is all within my ordained lot that I should have suffered like this. If I bear my destiny patiently, perhaps heaven will relent, and send me the man I can trust. But when will he come?" she sighed, "ah, when? However, you must go home now, or your honourable wife will discover, and never forgive me."

"But what have you got to fear from her?" asked Chu.

Tai-yu only sighed again.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE 'OLD MAN IN THE MOON' TO THE RESCUE.

Assistant Magistrate Chu was early to arrive the next time, for he was anxious to hear what Tai-yu had to say further. Yet, when he got there, she did not at first seem anxious to talk of more than trivial things. Finally she told him. He had expected something interesting, but he had not expected this. She told him that she had decided to 'follow the worthy.'

"Going to get married? When? To whom?" asked Chu in a shaky voice. He did not know why he should be so deeply affected by the information, and he only then began to realise how much he counted on her presence. He stared at Tai-yu as though he were looking through her, and said nothing.

"Well," asked Tai-yu wistfully, "are you not glad that I am to be taken out of this living hell?"

"Yes, I am really glad that your future has been assured," said Chu, recovering himself with an effort. "I was only wondering who the lucky man could be. Not any one I know, is he? I don't think any of my friends can be the man "

"You may know him or you may not," said Tai-yu "He is a good, trustworthy man."

"I believe you," Chu replied ; "you would not have chosen any other."

"But you don't seem pleased, though your lips say so," protested Tai-yu.

"How can I seem pleased," Chu said, "when it means that soon I shall be unable to approach your sweet presence. Heaven is indeed cruel to me. A good friendship seldom lasts long, but ours was only fated to last a month.

"A month," answered Tai-yu, "is at least better than never to have known each other at all."

"I would rather have none at all," said Chu, "than to have friends only to part."

"Oh," said Tai-yu, "men are so selfish."

"Would you say that my friendship was only selfish?" asked Chu, rather bitterly.

"No, no," replied Tai-yu, relenting. "but the most intimate of friends must give way to the lover."

"Then," said Chu, "if you really have found some one to love you, I will try not to interfere with your happiness. If you had not found such a man, I should, for myself, have been happy in the continuance of our friendship. But I wish I could have kept you, not only a little longer, but for ever. I feel now as though my heart would burst."

"Do you you really care so much?" asked Tai-yu, hesitatingly; "are you really fond of me, for myself?"

"Do I care for you!" burst out Chu; "you are the only person in the world for whom I care. If my position had been safe; if I had been sure that I could make you happy, I would long ago have given you a home. But it is all out of the question now."

"Suppose it is not yet too late?" murmured Tai-yu.

"Even then I could not say honestly that I could make you happy. You must know that there would be trouble with my wife. Oh, I wish that I were free. You must go to the other man."

"With you, there is no other man," declared Tai-yu.

Chu was more deeply moved than ever. They spoke for a little of the might-have-been. But, as Chu had to admit, it would be as hard for him to get money as to reach the sky. It would take 700 taels to redeem Tai-yu from her slavery, and Chu could not raise ten dollars. Still, they clung to the idea of happiness together, and at last when Tai-yu said she might raise three hundred taels from her friends among the singing girls, Chu promised impulsively to get the rest of the money. When they parted, Tai-yu had her wish. Chu had agreed to try to take her away from the life she was living.

All the way home Chu was wrestling with his new problem. He had no chance of raising money through any ordinary channel, for he had little credit. It was his wife who had the credit.

Then he thought of one acquaintance who might be the man to listen to just such an appeal as his. He was called Tang, and he was immensely rich, being the son of a wealthy pawnbroker. He spent money freely, and being a man of some individuality he was wont to spend it in not altogether usual ways. He had remained ever since his entry into official life an 'expectant' Taotai, not caring, as he said, for 'substantive' rank, which meant work and subservience to one's superiors. All he cared for was to be able to mix with the officials, and as he had money to spend and was willing to spend it, he got on well. It was at several 'flower feasts' that he and Chu had met, and he had always been very cordial.

Tang had one rule of life, and to it he made one exception. He would give feasts, and he would make presents, but he would not lend money. The only exception he made was in the case of friends of his who had got into trouble with the singing girls. Perhaps this was because he spent so much time and money with them, and was on such good terms with both the inmates and their visitors. It was another peculiarity, that might almost have been expected in such a man, that when he had once lent money he never so much as hinted at repayment. In his set he was known as 'The Old Man in the Moon,' because the Old Man in the Moon is supposed to be a divinity in charge of the matrimonial affairs of the sons of men. He ties a string to babies, before they are born, one end to the boy and one to the girl, by the leg, thus endowing them with an affinity to each other.

Chu asked Tang to supper, and rather shyly asked for 400 taels. He told him the whole truth, and Tang was moved actually to enthusiasm. He congratulated Chu on his luck in finding such a girl.

"Why," he said, "such a girl deserves to be redeemed at once. Think of her putting in 300 taels of her own for the sake of being able

to follow you. Your star this month must be the she-Phoenix. You are certainly a lucky chap."

His admiration for the girl was such that, as he said, he would have gone straight off and married her himself, had she not already given her promise to Chu. To show that his admiration was real, he threw in an extra 500 dollars, and told Chu to make her a worthy home with it. He would hear no thanks, and refused to mention any date for repayment.

Chu, highly elated, rented a house, and then went to Tai-yu with the wonderful news. He told her first of Tang's generosity, and then wanted to take her at once to see the new house. He was astonished when he found that Tai-yu had expected it to be his own home.

"No, no, you must not go near that lioness," said Chu sagely. You will literally be torn to pieces."

"But," pointed out Tai-yu, "she would give you more trouble if she were to find that you were secretly keeping me in a new home."

"Let that be," said the resolute Chu: "I would rather run the risk myself than expose you to it. I could never let you suffer at her hands."

So it was settled, and Tai-yu consented to go to the new house that was to be all her own.

CHAPTER XL.

A Bit of Bluff.

"I am afraid I shall have to sleep at the Yamen again to-night. There is another beastly trial on this evening." So spoke Assistant Magistrate Chu as he parted from his wife one morning, fully intending to visit his new concubine Tai-yu.

"You have been kept up about every other night for the last month," protested Madame Chu; "aren't any of the other officials ever supposed to do any work?"

Oh, yes," said Chu, rather uncomfortably; "but the Taotai, confound him, always pushes the heavy work on me. He says I am the only man he can trust."

"If that is the case," put in Madame, decisively, "I shall just speak to Madame Tai, and see to it that your office is changed."

"No, no," said Chu, quite alarmed; "after all, this *is* a special case, and I might as well get through with it and get the credit for it."

His wife seemed to agree with him, and Chu went happily off, still convinced that he was quite secure from the suspicions of the 'lioness.' He had begun to grow bolder with the success of his excuses, and to increase the number of his visits to Tai-yu. But Madame his wife was not so simple as she seemed. There might not be anything wrong, she thought, but then it would not do any harm to check up her husband's movements and find out.

So one day when a messenger came to tell her that the Assistant Magistrate would again be detained at his Yamen, she said nothing, but acted, with a disconcerting promptness. She made the messenger, her husand's confidential servant, go with her to the Yamen and wait while she enquired for her husband. The gatekeeper, off his guard, answered that the official had not been there for three days. The servant was properly caught out, but when Madame rounded on him and berated him for his lying, he stood his ground and refused to betray his master.

Madame, however, was not so easily baulked. Ordering her chairmen to go to the Yamen of a friend of her husband's, she sent in one of them to say that there was an important document that had to be placed immediately in the hands of Chu; and the unsuspecting friend at once gave the man full directions of the way to Chu's new home.

But in the meantime others had been acting also; the servants, who of course knew every detail of the private affairs of their master and mistress, and sympathised to a man with the former, set out to warn him. The cook went straight to the concubine's house, and gave him the warning in good time to get clear away, and another servant followed Madame's chair, to spoil any mischief she might

be up to, if possible. This man, as soon as she had left the Yamen of Chu's friend the official, went in himself and warned that gentleman of the true state of affairs. The worthy official saw that he had been caught napping, and being himself a married man, and one whose domestic affairs were not so very different from his friend's, either, he too set off hot-foot on the trail of Madame Chu, determined to repair if possible the damage done by his first blunder.

Madame found the house without much difficulty, but when she entered she was surprised to find that there were no servants in evidence, and that no doors were barred against her progress. Though a bit taken aback by the silence, she went straight ahead into the private quarters. There she found Tai-yu, sitting sewing with the most superb calmness, and no one else but a slave girl.

For the life of her, Madame Chu could not but feel a little doubtful that she had not got to the wrong place, as she asked Tai-yu who she was. Tai-yu, in the most self-possessed way, asked her what reasons she might have for coming and putting such a question, and the coolness of her bearing still more disconcerted Madame.

As she stood there hesitating, in came the official friend of her husband, all primed for any emergency. He began to explain, at once, in a plausible manner, that he had himself been out when Madame called, and that an ignorant subordinate had misled her. It was all due to the meanness, he said of another man, who to shelter himself had set up an establishment for his concubine under the name of Chu, who was so good natured that he easily allowed himself to be imposed upon. Only a few people knew that Chu himself had nothing to do with it. This little yarn, on top of the innocency displayed by Tai-yu, convinced Madame, and she allowed her chairmen to be called. But before going she suddenly asked the official if he could tell her where her husband really was.

"Why, dont you know?" asked that ingenious man. "But I see I must tell you. It is all this revolutionary business. Your honourable husband, being the trusty man he is, has been detailed for detective work, and in pursuit of his investigations he now spends most of his time in the houses of the singing girls, which the revolutionaries frequent. I would not have told even you, Madame, only that I know you to be the soul of discretion, and that I see that your poor husband, in his adherence to the letter of his orders, has not told you, and has so fallen undeservedly under the suspicion of loose living."

This completely staggered Madame. For once, she had not a suspicion to voice, and so chastened was she by the news of her husband's thrilling doings that she even managed to apologise to Tai-yu for her intrusion, and meekly entered her chair to be carried home.

CHAPTER XLI.

Virtue at Last Rewarded.

This narrow escape had a perhaps unexpected effect on Tai-yu., who was now convinced that it would not do to go on keeping Madame Chu in the dark. As the proverb has it, 'An ugly daughter-in-law can't help meeting the parents of her husband,' and so the sooner and the more openly they got over the crisis, the better. To her, a clean but slavish life was better than a life of shame in a gilded cage, and like many Chinese women she was wholly resigned to the decree of fate. She was a firm believer in the principle of 'sowing and reaping,' and believed that all the bad fortune that had been hers in this life was only the just sequel of the shortcomings of previous existences. To be born a girl was evidently in itself the punishment for some wickedness, and to be destined apparently to slavery was strong evidence of antecedent crime. Moreover, the sooner she went to meet her punishment, the sooner she would pass through her destined portion of suffering.

She could not consult Chu, because he was fighting shy of the place just then. He had had a good fright, but she had a message from his friend to say that he was still perfectly safe. So after long meditation by herself, Tai-yu determined to take what appeared to her to be the only wise step, and surrender her person to Madame Chu, trusting to her tact to win a place eventually in that lady's heart.

Once resolved, she did not hesitate. She took off all her ornaments and put them in a box, to take with her, and then she changed her fine garments for poor clothes of cotton, and dressed her hair to look as common as possible. Then, leaving her own pretty house in charge of the slave girl, she went off on foot to the house of her lord, which she had no difficulty in finding.

She got past the porter, to whom she did not wish to give her name, by giving out that she was a seller of jewels, and as such she gained direct admittance to Madame Chu. The surprise of Madame Chu may be imagined when this girl knelt down before her, and said:

"I am the concubine your honourable lord saved out of the pit. It is I for whom you were looking the other day. If you see fit to accept me as a handmaid, I will attend upon you. Otherwise I will go into the hills and become a nun. Here are my jewels."

Madame Chu was baffled. She was at first unable even to lose her temper. But gradually the use of her faculties began to return, and she assumed the tone in which she usually addressed her inferiors. "Are you the same woman who faced me so coolly the other day?" she asked, not telling the kneeling woman to rise.

"Yes, Madame," returned Tai-yu, respectfully. "It was I. But fearing that it would anger you unduly, I did not own up at the time. Now, however, I have come of my own accord, to show that I have nothing to hide."

"That is well said, indeed," put in Madame in a sneering tone. "But I should like to know how you could be so impudent as to let me apologise to you, you vixen." Madame was getting back to her old form.

But Tai-yu pleaded, in tears, that she had been too much frightened to say anything, and to show how sincere she was she again offered up her box of jewels. This time Madame saw the gold and the pearls. She snatched the box out of Tai-yu's hand, and then turned on her again.

"Your own valuables? You wretched vixen! Are these not bought with the money that I saved for the old fool? I'd like to know how you shameless women would get along if you had to earn as much money for a man. These are my property, and I intend to keep them. And as for you, the sooner you become a nun, the better."

Tai-yu was out-manoeuvred, and she threw herself at the feet of Madame Chu, weeping so bitterly that even the women servants begged for mercy on her behalf. But Madame was not to be moved by any sentimental plea, and stoutly maintained that she knew too much of the fascinations of these hussies to be let in for any of their tricks. "Why," she said, "once inside of my house and you would rule it, in a week. It would be easy enough for such an artful creature to manage that silly old man. No, get out of here! What? You want to say good-bye to your sweetheart? Good. Here, you, go and call your master." The servant came back immediately with the news that the master was not to be found.

"Well, you may be satisfied now," said Madame in bitter triumph to the poor weeping girl; "He was in when you arrived. I suppose he has gracefully taken himself off to your house to see you!"

That shot went home, and Tai-yu, broken-hearted, was just stumbling away, when a visitor came in. It was the wife of Chu's good friend the official, to whom he had just fled, and she had come to see if she could possibly do a good turn for the poor man. When she had heard the story that Madame was only too eager to tell her, she ventured to take a different view. She praised the honesty and simplicity that the girl's behaviour had shown, and then commented on her beauty. Then she turned to Tai-yu herself, and asked her if she would not be willing to have a place in the house, not as a new wife, but as a simple concubine. Tai-yu knelt down again, and said that as long as she could have a plain bowl of rice and a pinch of salt, she would be satisfied to serve Madame Chu faithfully. The official's wife then urged Madame again to take a moderate and reasonable view of the situation. Sooner or later, she pointed out, her honourable husband must take a concubine, for he had no son; and it was better to take a modest servant while she had the chance and the choice, than to have to put up later with a peace-disturber. In the end, the irate wife agreed, though in accepting Tai-yu she uttered many dark threats of what would be her fate if she got up to any tricks. So when at last Chu dared to sneak into his own house, he was told that all was settled as best it could be for the moment. "All right," he said uncomplainingly, "do as you think best."

Tai-yu found that the life she had herself elected to lead was not the most pleasant possible. To Madame, from whom she received

the most scant consideration, she rendered devoted service, cleaning her room, making her bed, and dressing her hair. The Assistant Magistrate, who dared not even speak to her affectionately, she had to avoid.

But it happened that at last, on Madame's birthday, Madame Tai, who had once, as Ah Pao, herself known the hardships of a slave girl's life, came to hear her story. Tai-yu had been sent for to sing and entertain the guests, and though she felt the humiliation she obediently brought out her guitar and sang the well known verses of 'The Fate of the Flower Girl.'

Oh, how sad is the fate of a flower girl!
No future, no respect, no happiness.
Once she was loved dearly by her parents,
But poverty put her in the flower lane.
Oh, how sad is the fate of a flower girl!
Early in the morning she must rise;
While others indulge in games and play
She must labour at the string and bow.
Oh. how sad is the fate of a flower girl!
She rests not, night or day.
It matters not whether she be sick or well,
To her it is whip or money.
With a masked face she makes money
To satisfy the demands of her patroness;
But never does she receive thanks
From her ungrateful mistress.
Oh. how sad is the fate of a flower girl!
Who loves her, who pities, who helps?
Mother, where was your loving heart,
When you sold her to a flower house!

Ah Pao was deeply touched by the song, and the personality of the singer. "Poor girl! she said; "how sad she looks! If I had a girl as pretty and as clever and as sweet. . . ."

"Why not adopt her?" suggested the official's wife who had first befriended her.

"Yes, why not?" seconded several other voices.

"Would not Madame Chu be jealous?" said Ah Pao, doubtfully.

"What would I not agree to, if my godmother wished it!" said Madame Chu, rather naively. That raised a general laugh, and striking while the iron was hot, the friendly official's wife at once told Tai-yu to come and kow-tow to her adopted mother. Her heart filled with joy, the hardly used concubine formally acknowledged Madame Tai as her mother.

She proved indeed a second mother, for from that time forth Madame Chu treated her husband's concubine with consideration, and the Assistant Magistrate and Tai-yu found that they had attained happiness at last.

CHAPTER XLII.

Applying the Magistrate's Golden Rule.

With the help of his wife, Assistant Magistrate Chu was really doing well for a man of his rank; but as for his wife, she was not satisfied. It was an expensive thing trying to keep up with the wives of wealthier officials. Besides, Chu, in spite of his new marriage, had evidently become addicted to the attractions of places of amusement. So Madame Chu, to kill two birds with one stone, got her friend Madame Tai to secure the position of Acting Magistrate of Tungchow for her husband, thus giving him a step up in the world and a step away from his convivial friends.

Chu was rather afraid of the dangers of the new appointment, for he really did not know what would be expected of him. But a good friend helped him out with advice, and gave him the name of an expert in criminal law, one Wang Hsiao-shing, whom he might consult when in difficulty.

"The key to success in official life," said his friend, sagely stroking his beard, "may be found in these few words: First, strictness; Second, slackness and Third, indifference. When you first take up the duties of your new post, you must make a show of severity. The reasons are evident. In the first place you will have the people properly cowed; and again, your superiors, who will keep a close watch over you to begin with, will be convinced of your integrity, and thereafter will take no notice of whatever you may do. Then, when the people have learned to be afraid of you, is the time to lay your plans, and to slacken the pressure a little. They will soon understand that you are willing to listen to terms. That is the second part of the formula. The last thing is indifference. When one party gives you money, the second party is sure to try the same lever. In such circumstances you must not allow any favour, one way or the other. Just turn a deaf ear. Let the matter hang fire, and do nothing, but make all the promises you like. That will either bring you more money or leave you in peace. Finally, in the matter of dealing with your superiors, leave all that to Wang. He knows how to court favour and to evade responsibilities." With which counsel, and many good wishes, his friend took himself off.

As Tungchow was only a few days' journey from Soochow, the red proclamation was sent to the city the day before Chu himself made the journey. The Yamen runners and underlings were all waiting on the landing when Chu's boat arrived. They formally asked him at what hour he intended to disembark and enter his Yamen, and on consulting his book of stars Chu found that noon of the next day would be a propitious hour. He accordingly announced his intention of taking over the seals at that time.

At noon the next day, accordingly, he started for the Yamen. Now it is a custom of the South that when a new magistrate takes

over the seal, any who think that the former magistrate decided a lawsuit against them unjustly, may appeal on this day to the new magistrate; and in cases so serious as to involve a life, or an action against an unfiilial son, the appeal may be made to the official before he arrives at his Yamen. This is commonly known as 'Appeal by blockading the sedan-chair.'

On this occasion such a petitioner duly put in an appearance, jumping out of an alley and blocking the progress of the chair.

"My Lord," he cried, "My Lord, you are as clear as the blue sky. Listen to my appeal."

Chu, frightened at first, became angry when he saw how the man was dressed. He was in deep mourning, draped from head to foot in white cloth and yellow grass-cloth.—an omen of bad luck to a man proceeding to take up office. Nervously he asked what the man wanted, and the petitioner, kneeling down, said that his father, who had died a few months before, had left him some property, but that the two nephews of the dead man had brought a suit against him, claiming that he was not a genuine heir, and that the property should revert to them. He claimed that the former magistrate had taken bribes and decided the case against him, but hearing of the arrival of his impartial Honour he had come to ask for redress.

Chu did not let him go on. He struck the resting-board of the chair, and cried out against the man for a scoundrel. What did he mean by appearing before him in such clothes? Did he not have the sense to know that this was not a day on which such a bad omen could be permitted? He might have put on the costume purposely, to appear filially devoted, but Chu knew the people of this city, and their tricks, and he had heard what a lot of law court pests they were. He fully intended to make an example of a few of them.

"I do not want to take a man in mourning into my Yamen now," he said; "but you had better run away while you have the chance, before I do lock you up."

As Chu spoke in the Northern Mandarin, the poor man did not of course understand him properly, but he gathered that he had been told to go away. Bursting into tears, he began to plead afresh, which angered Chu still more. Tears were worse than white clothes. He ordered that the man be carried to the Yamen, after first taking off his white garments.

Arrived at the Yamen, the usual ceremonies were observed, and after Chu had accepted the seal the Yamen staff made their official obeisance to him.

The next thing was to deal, without delay, with the man who had worn the offending white. He was had up, and asked if he had anything to say for himself. Thinking that he was expected to state his case, he called out that he had been wronged, and asked again for redress.

"What did you say?" thundered the Magistrate, cutting him short, "you have been wronged? Have I wronged you, you wretch?" And he ordered the runners to give him a sound thrashing on the spot. "And don't stop till I tell you," he added grimly.

Like falcons swooping on their prey the runners pinned the man to the ground, and laid his back bare. Two men, one on either side,

beat him with bamboos, counting off each stroke. The man screeched for mercy, but the Magistrate only exhorted the executioners to lay on. The skin broke on the wretch's back, and bits of flesh began to gather on the ends of the bamboo poles. The executioners at last looked up, hoping for orders to stop, for the man had received some eight hundred strokes, and was near death. The Magistrate looked down and saw two big pools of blood. He was satisfied. Red was the colour of good luck, and the blood ought at least to counteract the bad luck of the white the man had been wearing.

The Magistrate was for locking the man up till he was well enough to receive another beating, but was advised that it was risky to keep such a bearer of ill-luck in the Yamen; so he was allowed to go, after signing a confession that he had deliberately insulted the Magistrate on the road, and created a disturbance in the court; and that knowing he had violated the law of His Majesty, he promised in future to lead a better life. The poor fellow went home not even knowing why he had been beaten. The only conclusion he could come to was that his cousins had been beforehand with him and bribed the new Magistrate.

When Chu retired that night he told his wife what had happened.

"You silly fool," said his wife, "you have spoiled a good bit of business. You ought to know by now that a lawsuit is just what you should to look out for. You should have listened to his side and then summoned the other parties."

"No, no," said Chu, conscious for once of superiority; "I have been applying the key of success."

"What key?" asked his puzzled wife.

"The key to success in office is: First, strictness; Second, slackness and Third, indifference. I have been strict to-day, do you see?"

"Well, there's something in that," admitted his wife. "Are you going to be slack to-morrow?"

"We must put up the sail as the wind blows," said Magistrate Chu.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The Financial Importance of an Adopted Grandmother.

The accountant of a magistrate is a person of consequence. He has to cook the accounts for his master, to hide the squeezes of the administration, and when a new man takes over the Yamen he is in for an anxious time. Usually he bribes the previous accountant to put him up to the local practices. From his predecessor he can secure, for a consideration, the real book of expenditures—the accounts of money paid that simply cannot appear on the official record. In this book the new magistrate can find what he is expected to pay to his immediate superiors at the New Year and on the occasions of birthdays, weddings and festivals. These things are regular fees, and if they are not paid up there will be a black mark coming at the Autumn Review. Again, if the Yamen staff are allowed more squeeze than before, they are spoiled, while if they receive less than under the old order, they sulk, and spoil 'business.'

But Chu, to save expenses, did not bring with him one of the fraternity of accountants, employing his brother-in-law instead. This man knew nothing of ordinary accounts, to say nothing of the mysteries of official accounts. In taking over the books, he did not even ask for the real book of expenditures; instead, he went over the fictitious books, and actually wanted to be shown something to account for the things entered as purchased there. The old accountant was up in arms. He stuck out for the honoured tradition, according to which presents and feasts came first, before the delivery of the real accounts, the key to the financial situation. Seeing that the new accountant was a novice and stingy as well, the accountant of the outgoing magistrate set about to teach him a lesson, and a few words put all the Yamen staff on his side. But he was counting without Madame Chu.

For some time Chu, backed up by his wife, refused to come to terms, and tried to get along without any guide. But his brother-in-law had a bad time. One day the document department presented him with list of festival rewards that would be due for payment within a few days. The new accountant was entirely at sea. Some of the items were so strange to him in name and nature that he thought the Yamen clerks must be taking deliberate advantage of his ignorance. Not daring to act on his own responsibility, he consulted Madame Chu. She knew no more than he did, but in her usual stout-hearted way she cut out anything she could not understand and ordered the rest to be paid at 80% of the list value. The Yamen hands were now as seriously alarmed as the old accountant, and refused to accept anything, saying that the accountant could keep his dirty money.

The accountant was frightened, but Madame made him take them at their word. The servants promptly changed their tactics, and began a general boycott. Their trained ears suddenly became

deaf, and their always sensitive minds, which very well knew how to interpret the mere expression of a magistrate, became ridiculously stupid. For several days the Magistrate was unable to summon so much as a witness, and as for the land taxes, all that came in during the next week was 14,000 cash—about $13.

Even the cook was enlisted, and badly burned rice and half-cooked meat began to be the rule, while the quantity of everything became niggardly. When Madame protested, he protested in return that "it was impossible for even a resourceful daughter-in-law to cook a meal without rice."

Madame pointed that the price of the pork was exorbitant. He ought to be able to get 'official meat' from the butchers for next to nothing. No, said the cook, the butchers all threatened to boycott him if he did not pay more. Madame grimly asked for the name of a butcher who dared to flout the Magistrate, but the cook suavely represented that they were all in it.

Madame sent for the head of the Butchers' Guild; but she was reckoning without the Yamen runners. The messenger did not report until late in the evening, and then appeared to say that the chief butcher had gone away to visit his grandmother, and that the guild house was shut up.

Affairs went from bad to worse, until Chu had to call in the legal expert to whom he had a reference, and after going into the affair from the beginning, as a mediator should, he advised them to compromise and get hold of the reference book.

At last even Madame Chu weakened; but she shrewdly pointed out that after all this ill-feeling, even if they did get a book, it might very well turn out to be a false one, just to serve them a bad turn. When she received an offer of the book for three hundred taels, she flatly refused to pay more than a hundred. Madame was not altogether surprised to have this offer accepted with suspicious readiness, though the mediator was certainly surprised. He thought he had settled everything, but Madame at once pronounced the book false.

To begin with, she knew that Tungchow was a fairly important position, so that at least a hundred dollars should be given to the magistrate's superior on the occasion of a birthday; but in the book it was entered as fifty. Again, when an Inspector passed through the city, he should receive two gifts—the 'humble present' and the 'extra present,' which should be about double, but was here entered as actually less.

So when the Prefect had a grandson added to his tribe, Madame was not unduly surprised to find that there was no precedent entered in the book. She went on a method of her own, though, and finding the amount prescribed in the book for a similar event in the family of a Taotai, she added a percentage to make up for the accountant's malice in undercutting the amounts. From that she subtracted again, as a Prefect was one step lower than a Taotai; and as a grandson is less important than a son, she made a further subtraction. The resultant sum of $64 she sent, with a special congratulatory epistle, by a runner. An extra 10%—$6.40—accompanied the letter as door-money for the porter. The packet of money was labelled 'Happy present of $64,' as usual.

When the money was presented, the porter at first refused to take it. He pointed out that to begin with the amount was not enough —nor was his tip—and that there was a grave breach of etiquette in the characters on the address. The Magistrate ought to have been courteous enough to find out the characters used in the names of the Prefect and all his kindred and to avoid using them. In this case the character for 'happy' was used in the Prefect's own name, and that for 'present' appeared in the infant name of His Honour's grandfather. The messenger, however, was unwilling to go home for fear of Madame, and finally the porter, just to teach the whole lot of them a lesson, took in the present.

The Prefect was playing the game of 'Sparrow' with a concubine when the porter entered. He was pleased to hear that a present had come from the Magistrate; but when he saw the label, his face turned green.

"Don't you know your business better than this?" he roared. "What do you mean by handing in such a thing?"

"Yes," Your Honour," replied the porter; "but the messenger insisted."

"Tell him to go home, then, and be glad he is not beaten. The Magistrate ought to know that it is an outright insult. What does he mean by presenting such a mean sum? Does he think I am a beggar? And to add insult to injury, he goes and uses my name and my grandfather's on the label! How dare he? How am I to be a Prefect if I cannot even defend my grandfather's name?"

Chuckling inwardly to himself, the porter gathered up the packet and returned it to the messenger; though he refused to give up his tip. Full of fear the crestfallen runner returned to the Yamen, not feeling that his skin would be very safe when the Magistrate's good lady heard what had happened. But to his astonishment she took it quite calmly, saying that she could very well use the money to better purpose elsewhere.

As for the Prefect, he waited and he waited, but nothing happened. Before taking steps to make things hot for the Magistrate, though, he thought it better to make a few enquires; for this indifference made him suspicious. He found that Madame Chu was the adopted granddaughter of the Governor.

"A pity I did not accept the $64," was the conclusion of the Manchu Prefect.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Some Practical Law.

Magistrate Chu was not an exceptional man among the magistrates of his day. Among them were to be found men of every degree of character and attainments, ranging from scholars of the old school down to the most debased opium smoker—who is ever with us. The scholars, unhappily, are passing from among us. For the rest, Chu may be taken as an average specimen, and to recount a few of his magisterial pronouncements may afford some index to the typical official mind.

The refusal of the old accountant to hand over the records prejudiced Chu against any decision of the former magistrate.. If a case were brought before him for a second hearing, he was sure to reverse the previous decision, apart altogether from the merits of the case. This habit could not fail to be noticed, and many were the litigants who appeared before him to seek a fresh hearing.

Thus, one Chang had owed a man named Sung the sum of twenty dollars for many years. He had never showed any signs of paying up, and his creditor had brought an action against him which the previous Magistrate had decided, very properly, against the debtor. Now Chang, the cunning fellow, brought a counter-action, hoping to get off scot-free.

Chang, unexpectedly, upheld the decision of his predecessor, and ruled that the money was a just debt, and should be paid, but when the money was produced, in court, he insisted that the creditor should produce his original guarantor. The poor man pleaded that the guarantor had died years ago; but there was the paper that Chang himself had signed, and moreover even Chang had not the impudence to dispute his identity.

"What barefaced effrontery!" thundered the magistrate; "if the plaintiff does not question your identity, I do. Do you expect me to let you take money out of this court without producing the guarantor for your identity? Go and find him; and until he is forthcoming, I will keep the money in the coffers!"

There was no way out of it, and both men went away resolved against bringing any more actions in that court.

A more complicated case was one of wheat-stealing. A man named Hu accused one named Hsu of cutting and keeping his wheat. Hsu was convicted without a hearing, and given a beating. The magistrate announced that if he had any defence, he could produce it afterwards. After his beating he said that the land was his, and that Hu, to create a title to it, had planted wheat there; to assert his rights he had therefore cut the wheat.

"Bring up the plaintiff," said the magistrate, and addressed him thus:

"You cunning son of a turtle, don't you know that your magistrate is a just man, and will duly discover your iniquities?" And he ordered that he receive the same number of strokes.

But this man too claimed to be really in the right; nevertheless the magistrate would not hear him until after the beating. Then he was heard to this effect: That the land was originally a private road, owned by his family; that Hsu, a notoriously grasping man, had tried to encroach on it; and that in his own defence he had turned the road into a field, as he had a perfect right to do.

"I see," said the magistrate; "another beating is about his due."

The executioners had not laid hands on the man before he began to cry out that injustice was being done; Hu shouting against him that on the contrary he was an evil-doer, and was about to receive his deserts. The magistrate silenced them by ordering that each be dealt fifty slaps on the face, and then he grimly announced that both were very evidently shameless and greedy men, and that for the public welfare he would cause the road to be taken from them, and made into a public highway.

"But," said one man, "the wheat should be mine, as I cultivated it," "Not so," intervened the magistrate, who had forgotten about the wheat; "that shall go into the public granary."

Needless to say it did not; it was carted into the Yamen, and it never came out again: but as both the men had been forced to sign a confession to the effect that they had wrongfully cultivated wheat on public land, what could be done about it?

What gave Magistrate Chu most private satisfaction, however, was the case of Liu, who had two wives, one 'big' (proper) and one 'small' (a concubine.) Presuming on the fact that the husband preferred her to the older spouse, the 'small' wife became insulting and offensive towards her senior, and coming to blows, scratched her face. The harassed husband was dragged into court, in the case of 'big' wife *v.* 'small' wife.

Now Chu, for reasons that may be remembered, was prejudiced against 'big' wives, so he gave this lady no hearing.

"I know what you 'big' wives are," he said. "It is your common practice to maltreat the 'small' wife, and if the 'small' wife was driven to the use of her finger nails, it must have been in self defence. The proverb says that 'when the upper beam is straight, the lower beam cannot get out of position.' If you minded your own affairs, who would have dared to defy you? Leave her alone in future, or I will have you locked up."

Then he turned on the husband, and lectured him. What business had he to take a 'small' wife, if he could not control his first wife? He might at least have kept them in separate establishments.

"Your Honour," protested the man, "formerly I kept them apart, but the 'big' wife constantly followed me to the other house, and made trouble, so that finally I was forced to let her have the 'small' wife under her in the same establishment."

"Just as I thought," commented the magistrate darkly. "I knew it was her fault. Take them away, and if you have difficulty in the future, send the 'big' wife to me; I will deal with her.

"I have at least got a little of my own back, for Tai'yu's sake," he thought, leaving the court room.

CHAPTER XLV.

Diamond Cut Diamond

'Easy money' as it may seem to have the opportunities of an official, the man in power does not always get the best of it. There are times when his spoils are in danger, and officials have even been robbed—by unscrupulous persons!

The magistrate of Lingcheng, Hsiung by name, held his office for three peaceful years, and must have laid by a pretty sum in that time. It was a country district, and there was little to do but gather in the land taxes at the right season. Hsiung in his leisure hours cultivated pleasant relations with the gentry, and through their friendly interest became known to the provincial authorities as a man who had 'captured the hearts of the people.'

But in the fourth year, and in the middle of the tax collecting season at that, came a telegram to say that his father had died. Now if he had published this news, he must by law have vacated his post at once, and have suffered serious financial loss; so he kept it quiet. Rumours did get about, but by taking his senior clerks into his confidence and making a reduction in the rates of taxation, he managed to get in the main part of the revenues in a few days. He hung on as long as he could, and then put out a notice of his father's death, and informed his provincial authorities. They duly accorded him the official permission to keep mourning, and informed him at the same time of the despatch of his successor, Assistant Magistrate Liu.

Liu hastened to get on the spot before the departure of Hsiung, not wishing him to slip off before he made sure of his share of the pickings of the land tax. He promptly demanded the books of his predecessor, and was not perhaps surprised, though certainly grieved, to find that the cream of the levy was neatly scooped off.

He vowed to make trouble for the wolf-hearted Hsiung, and a few enquiries put him on the track of the latter's criminal suppression of the news of his father's death. With this weapon in reserve, he despatched a private secretary to interview Hsiung's secretary, and warned him that unless a settlement were arrived at, there would be trouble brewing.

Hsiung was in a tight fix, but he was loth to yield anything or to confess defeat at the hands of another official. He fell back on the gentry; sending a festal table to P'ai, the most influential of them, he protested his ardent affection, saying that although in the circum stances he was unable to entertain at his own house, he hoped that this little entertainment would be acceptable. The gentleman was aware of the crisis in the air, and was not surprised when the feast was followed up by a visit from the secretary of his old ally, with a present of furs.

The secretary came straight to the point, it being unnecessary, as he remarked, to deal in formalities. P'ai looked much embarrassed. He swayed his head from right to left, and described circles with it, as though to shake out of it some miraculously crafty scheme.

"You see," he said, "it is one thing to whitewash the reduction of the rates—that could be worked by a back-dated petition from us to the effect that owing to a succession of bad harvests the farmers have been reduced to great distress, making such a relief imperative. Then no investigator could do anything; but the problem is to smooth over the delayed announcement of the death of the magistrate's honourable father." However he promised to see what could be done.

After a tactful delay, P'ai came forward with the results of his activities. He wore a pained expression. Those greedy fellows had forgotten their friendship so far as to demand money for their kindly offices! Still, not so much—a matter of 2,000 taels. Well, the magistrate could do nothing but pay, though he managed to get the amount reduced to dollars.

In the meantime the new magistrate established a foothold by giving a feast to which he invited the leaders of all the guilds. He even called on them personally, before issuing the invitations, and at the feast he himself poured the wine, and ended up with a speech in which he said that as a newcomer in the place he would constantly have recourse to their advice, particularly in matters which might affect the interests of their guilds. They were vastly flattered. Had not the old magistrate relied only on those in the higher places as his accomplices?

But P'ai and his party were present at the feast too, and this development alarmed them. On consultation they decided to stand by Hsiung, whose money was almost in their grasp, and risk the rest. So they drew up a defensive petition to the provincial authorities, in which they lauded the virtues and integrity of Hsiung as comparable to those of the ancient sages. The reduction of the land taxes was mentioned as proof of his compassion for the people. He was not only so loved, but so indispensable, that they, the representatives of the people, had prevailed on him to delay the announcement of his father's death. As the sole purpose of mourning is to show respect and love, and as faithfulness in the discharge of official duties is universally recognised as nothing else than filial piety, the magistrate had done the most pious thing possible in remaining at his post and helping the people over their period of distress.

This petition tickled Hsiung so much that P'ai, who brought it to him, took the opportunity to say that he had expended an extra 500 dollars in procuring signatures, and Hsiung actually paid the money without demur. In this way did P'ai squeeze oil from pebbles.

But the new magistrate was not far behind in launching a counter campaign, and he had the enthusiastic backing of the guilds, with the result that a petition for the censure of the old official, first on the ground of his heinous offence in the matter of the suppressed telegram, but also with a long tale of other offences more material to back it up, was presented to the Viceroy, just as P'ai and his party had foreseen.

The Viceroy pondered deeply when the two petitions were laid before him. It was most suspiciously unusual to have behaved that way about the telegram. If there were all that justification, why had not the magistrate and his friends the gentry acted openly in the first place? Besides, the other petition had more signatures. He did go so far as to send an investigator down, before taking action; but as he first informed the investigator of his private opinion in the matter, that official went down with his mind made up beforehand. Nor was he induced to change his mind by a substantial present from Hsiung's representative at the provincial capital, though he accepted it with every sign of friendliness.

On his arrival at Lingcheng he took a private house. Rule required that he should not call on either party to the dispute, but that all documents and evidence be submitted to him from both sides. Both, however, sent him presents, saying that as custom unfortunately deprived them of the pleasure of offering him hospitality, they took leave to defray at least the expenses of his stay.

After a few days spent in seeing the sights of the place, and accepting the hospitalities of some of the leading men, he returned to present the report he had already written. With the report he surrendered the money he had received from the old magistrate, as a proof of that official's guilt and of his own uprightness. The report, so flattering to his own insight, pleased the Viceroy immensely. Hsiung was duly deprived of his rank and title, and Liu was commended for his 'capture of the people's minds.'

As for the investigator, he received special promotion for his incorruptibility.

CHAPTER XLVI

SQUEEZES AND SCHOOLS.

Having entered on his tenure of office on the basis of a strictly business understanding with the guild representatives, Assistant Magistrate Liu found it expedient to continue along the same lines. An official's troubles never come from the masses, but from the classes. Not even a popular riot could come to a head if it were not inspired by the gentry.

There was, for instance, a flourishing wine trade in his district, the wine being made largely for export but also consumed in considerable quantities locally. To get a revenue from this trade, he found it safe and simple to farm out the taxes to the most important man in the trade. Such a man would know the exact degree of taxation that each distillery and wine shop could bear, and standing as he did between the magistrate and the public, as an influential guildsman, would guarantee that there should be no riots against the new taxation. He could save the trouble of collecting on an exact rate according to output by giving the option of a fixed monthly assessment. Certain districts could be sub-let, the tax farmer to turn in a fixed sum per month and make his own expenses and what else he could extort. For goods in transit the merchant established stations along the rivers and main roads and at the city gates, to collect dues; and the wine shops he bled to the amount of a cash per bowl of wine sold, the money to be placed in a box at the door of each shop. The trade in the brothels was also covered, houses paying a monthly sum according to the pretentiousness of the establishment. These houses proved quite amenable, since by this payment they gained a certain status, which to them was worth the price. Brothels are supposed to be illegal, and in the city it was almost a ritual to break up the shop as a finish to the evening's entertainment; but if there were a certain official interest behind the business, the police would take a real interest in orderliness, and patrons would behave more delicately. So the brothels were all for education.

For to screen his exactions the magistrate had decided to advertise the progress of education in his district. The Peking Government was at that time taking a praiseworthy interest in education, and exhorting the provincial authorities in pious mandates to establish schools. Education, therefore, Liu would foster, and schools he would establish; but he would not ruin himself in the process.

In the old days, each guild used to have a school of its own, and these Liu proposed to take over. To show how reasonable he was, the magistrate offered to install blackboards and bells, and subsidise the teachers; the guilds to modernise the schools by painting them blue outside and putting glass instead of paper in the windows. When the teachers had been supplied with a box of chalk each, the process

of making the old-fashioned guild schools into modern primary schools was complete.

The next thing was to get a middle school established, and put himself ahead of neighbouring cities. So he pitched on a temple, accused the priests of loose living, turned them out, altered the mess tables and benches into desks, called the gong in the courtyard a school bell (this was very important) and behold his middle school. A broken down scholar of the old order was secured at a cheap rate to teach the classics and history, and a merchant's accountant taught mathematics—the use of the abacus. As he happened also to dabble in water-colours, drawing was added to the curriculum, thus swelling the magistrate's just pride. He enticed away a student from the Mission school to teach English. The missionary protested that it was absurd; the boy had had only one year's study of the language, and knew nothing but a few words and some mutilated grammar. The official smiled wisely. The students of the middle school knew nothing at all, so he did not require a man who knew a lot to teach them.

Thus the city marched into the front ranks of modern progress.

CHAPTER XLVII.

PEACE AND PROSPERITY.

Assistant Magistrate Liu was a most sociable man, and although he had not been in office more than six months, he was already on such terms with the spokesmen of the guilds that he would invite them to assemble for a general discussion before he put any project into execution. At one of his feasts there came up, quite naturally, the favourite topic of the schools and the prosperity and dignity they were bringing to not a few of those present.

"The boys are doing really well," said a merchant who was one of the directors of the middle school. "I went in the other day and examined some of them. The first class in English have already learned as far as the letter Armu (M)."

"That is quick progress," remarked the magistrate. "It is a tribute to your ability, Elder Brother."

"Not at all," hastened to say the merchant, who was evidently pleased; "if it were not for the 'watering and cultivating' of Your Honour, we should never have accomplished this great reform. As to the rapid progress of the scholars, it is doubtless the appreciation of your goodness that has stimulated their diligence."

"True indeed," echoed a score of voices.

"I am afraid," said the magistrate, "that it is not true; but however, I received yesterday a reply from the Prefect to my report on our educational reforms. He has taken note of my recommendation of your devoted services."

"Of course we are only too grateful that Your Honour should so 'cultivate' us when we hardly merit it," said a pawnshop proprietor; "we are merely sharing the glory that is your just due."

"It seems to me," said the magistrate, taking up the tale again, "that there is one blank spot in the beautiful picture we have made. Surely every city of note has an Office of Works? But we have no such thing. I am not sure that it is becoming to lag so far behind the times.

"I consider myself fortunate to be magistrate of this city. With such intelligent cooperation, I feel able to accomplish anything. Indeed I should like to hand over the administration entirely to you, reserving to myself merely the function of general supervision. I should like to form a board of directors to look after such things as road-cleaning, street-lighting, and the control of the police."

These words impressed his audience profoundly; none more so than Yuan, the Director of the Silk Merchants' Guild, who, ever since his neighbour the wine merchant had risen to affluence and dignity under the new dispensation, had been chafing for a chance to win name and fame among his townsfolk.

Thus it happened that the next day his sedan chair turned down a narrow but clean-swept lane, deserted and almost quiet, save for

the sing-song voices of a class in a near-by school, learning their classics. At the far end of the lane was a gateway over which was stretched a large red cloth, in token of formal activities of some sort, and inside the gateway sat or lay groups of footmen and chair bearers, chatting, joking, quarrelling or snoring; but all in a subdued manner.

A porter greeted him respectfully, and told him that the meeting of the guild which he had called was already assembled. He went straight into the inner courtyard, and entered at a door from which a servant held aside the curtain, announcing to those within that the Director had arrived.

All stood up as the old man came in, lifting up his hands and locking them before him to salute the members of the guild, and making his ceremonial apologies for not having been there before them. Then all sat down again, and for the next half-hour nothing was heard but the noises of sucking, puffing, blowing and spitting, all part of the ritual of the water-pipe. Some one did start to speak, but what he said was lost in puffs. The others seemed to understand his difficulties, and made no conversational effort beyond swaying and nodding and humming and hawing.

At length the Director laid his pipe on the small table before him, drank the cup of tea that stood there, and cleared his nose, by way of his throat. This noise was as effective as the military command to 'attention.' All detached the small bowls of their pipes, and blew through the little tube, clearing out the tobacco; but retained the pipes in their hands when they saw that the Director had taken up his again. But this time he sucked at it with decreased vigour and shorter puffs. After inhaling a few times, each time detaching the bowl to blow through the tube and clear out the smoked ash, afterwards putting in a tiny charge of tobacco and relighting, the Director began his speech.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you will no doubt recall the Magistrate's proposal to establish an Office of Works. I, your younger brother, do not know what an Office of Works is, though I have been active in public affairs for a generation." Here he desisted, and had recourse again to his pipe.

"If our Senior Old Gentleman is at a loss. . . ." began one of the younger hands; but the Director ignored him. After further puffing and sucking and expectoration he seemed suddenly to recall himself, and resumed the thread of his speech.

"The magistrate's idea is to enlarge his scope in the regulation of the lives of the people," he said, putting it euphemistically. "He wants the guilds to lend him a hand. Now although I do not know exactly what an Office of Works is, I could make a fair guess, from the indications given in his remarks the other night. It will cover the control of land and public property, not to mention other municipal affairs. You know very well how we came off in that dispute about Heng Ta-fah's property last year. Now if at that time we had had control of the official regulation of such affairs, we would have known how to submit the case and win the dispute." The Director had here exhausted his breath, and applied to his pipe for a fresh supply.

The others began to discuss the question eagerly, and their Director listened very carefully. Finally he intervened and summed

up. He pointed out what it would mean to pass from the regulation of the affairs of a single guild to the control of so many interests. What a prospect for money and honour! If they got there first, it would mean fat posts for them all. All they had to do was to back him for the post of Director of the Office of Works, and he would remember them all, and power and glory would accrue to the Silk Merchants' Guild. He stressed very lightly his personal ambition, which was to become the "General High Interferer Until the Squeeze Comes In" of the whole city. Finally he urged them to put up funds. He whipped out a yellow book, and wrote with a flourish: "Yuan Ta-hua willingly contributes Tls. 200." That carried the meeting, and they all came forward like a band of brothers. When it was all added up, it came to considerably more than a thousand taels.

When the meeting had broken up, Yuan lost no time in repairing to the Yamen of the magistrate. The latter, who had more than an idea of his errand, welcomed him into his private study. Tea was served, and the guest was invited to drink as he pleased. (This is a great sign of intimacy. Ordinarily the tea is not drunk until the end of the interview, when the lifting of the cup is a conventional sign of intention to depart.)

"With all your duties and responsibilities, it is exceedingly good of you to come over," said the magistrate.

"I would not have dared to interrupt you," said the Director, "had I not urgent business to discuss."

"Is there anything I can do for you? You may count on me," said the magistrate.

"That shows Your Honour's readiness to consider those under your rule," replied the merchant. "However, I am only here to offer my services."

"But it is not right," said the magistrate, guardedly, "to trouble you again after all you have done for the city."

"Even you," pointed out the Director smoothly, "have done much for us, though it is not your native city. How much more, therefore, ought not we to exert ourselves for the welfare of the city, after such an example."

"It is only my duty," said the magistrate smugly.

The silk merchant went on to lay before the official the offer of the support of his guild, pointing out that as they were a body of great importance, others would follow their lead in this reorganisation of public affairs; and finally he offered financial backing to the amount of at least 500 taels.

The Magistrate thanked him for his generous offer. "You may be sure," he added, "that I shall not forget how you have taken the lead in this matter. You will not be unwilling to give me advice and perhaps a helping hand when the Office is opened?"

Yuan assured him of his services.

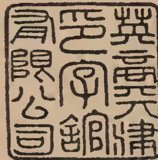
"Thank you," said the magistrate. "Would you mind partaking of my roughly prepared rice tonight?"

"I shall be honoured to keep you company."

And that evening the two drank and talked together like a pair of blood brothers.

While as for the Director's promises to his guildsmen, they were amply fulfilled, and the Silk Merchants' Guild became a power in the land; and Yuan himself grew so fat that he was a marvel; and the number of his concubines was not limited.

THE END.



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